

192
PAGES

AUGUST 1989
\$2.00 U.S./\$2.50 CAN.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION®

ORSON
SCOTT
CARD
LUCIUS
SHEPARD
ISAAC
ASIMOV



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Play PAST LIVES...

If You Dare to Uncover Secrets of Your Past!

Play PAST LIVES...the game that reveals lives you could have lived before. PAST LIVES is a fun and fascinating boardgame that takes you back through the shadows of history; through the Industrial Age, back through the Age of Kings and the Dark Ages to Ancient Times. Each age has treasures, twists of fate and pitfalls unique to that time period.

Adding to the enjoyment of the game is its magnificent artistic treatment. Hundreds of game cards bear the design and art talent of David Edward Byrd, the only living U.S. artist whose work hangs in the Louvre.

Everyone begins play as "Scum of the Earth." With adept play and good deeds, players accumulate points as they ascend through the ranks of the "Commonplace & Vulgar," "Heroes & Heroines," and finally to the "Great & Saintly." At game's end, players refer to the Book of Past Lives, which details hundreds of actual lives from history. How well you've played the game determines who you could have been in a previous life. PAST LIVES...play it if you dare to know whether you were a king or a knave; a saint or a strumpet; a poet or only a peasant.



Up to 8 can play! Available wherever games are sold!

The Avalon Hill Game Company

DIVISION OF MONARCH AVALON, INC.

4517 Harford Road ★ Baltimore, MD 21214

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AT LAST IN PAPERBACK

Generations from now, the battle of the sexes may be humanity's last hope.

Not since Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* has there been a novel of tomorrow as provocative, as controversial, and as thrilling as **THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY**. It will anger you. It will shake you. And it will ultimately reaffirm your faith in our future.

"Lively, thought-provoking...

the plot is ingenious, packing a wallop of a surprise."

—URSULA K. LeGUIN,
Los Angeles Times

"It's grand...."

One of the most involving, serious, and deeply felt studies of the relations between the sexes that I have ever read—and then some."

—MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

The **Gate To Women's Country**

SHERI S. TEPPER



BANTAM
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DENVER • LOS ANGELES

The long-awaited sequel to the award-winning BORN TO EXILE

Once a foundling, then a thief, Alaric is a wandering minstrel with a special magic—teleportation—that has forced him into exile and brought him to the valley of the Red Lord. There, he discovers a horror so terrible he is forced to flee. Yet Alaric cannot forget the terror he had left behind, knowing it was his destiny to challenge the evil that waited. Waited in the Red Lord's realm...

— IN THE — **RED LORD'S REACH**

**PHYLLIS
EISENSTEIN**

Praise for BORN TO EXILE:

"A delightful book, filled with the kind of fantasy which hasn't been around since I used to read fairy tales when I was a kid. I get the same kind of wonder and delight from it that I did from reading Hans Christian Andersen and Andrew Lang's fairy books when I was a girl."

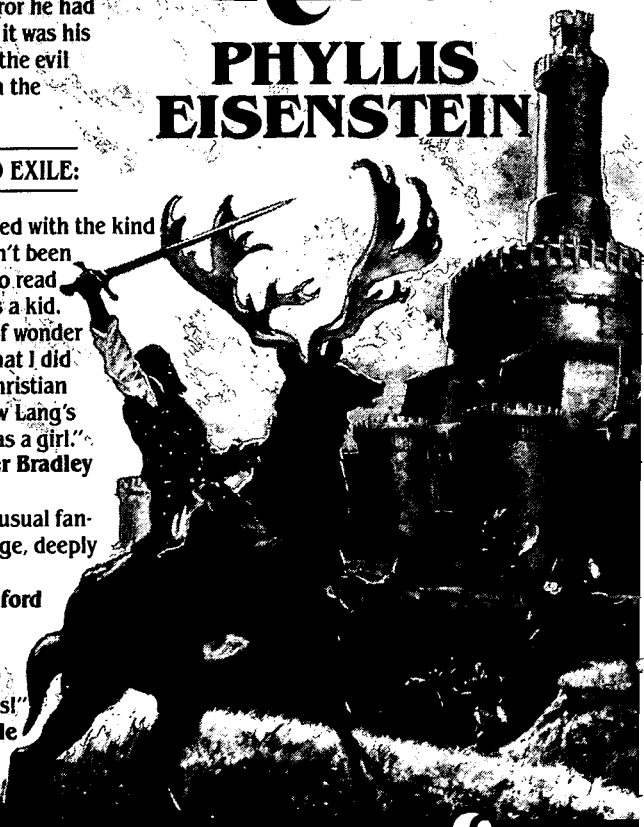
—Marion Zimmer Bradley

"BORN TO EXILE is unusual fantasy...piercing, strange, deeply felt! I read it straight through."—Greg Benford

"An excellent novel...
FANTASY AT ITS BEST
...my congratulations!"

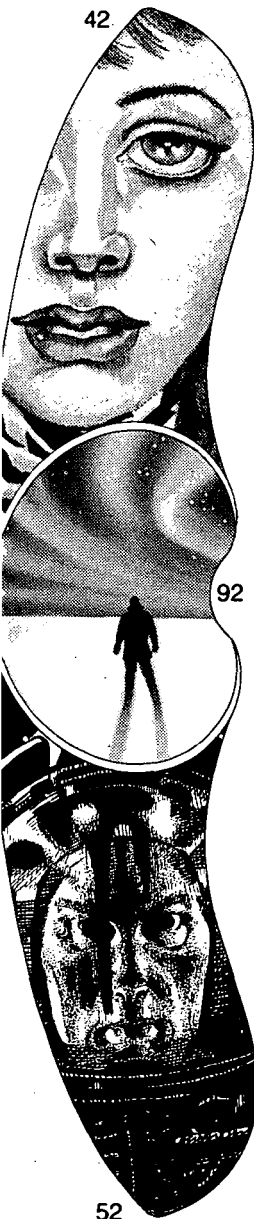
—Jerry Pournelle

\$3.95



SIGNET  **FANTASY**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



ISAAC ASIMOV's SCIENCE FICTION®

Vol. 13 No. 8 (Whole number 146)

August 1989

Next issue on sale

July 25, 1989

Novella

116 Pageant Wagon _____ Orson Scott Card

Novelettes

16 Surrender _____ Lucius Shepard

52 Nightmares of the Classical
Mind _____ Charles Sheffield

92 Baffin Island _____ M.F. McHugh

Short Stories

42 To Your Health _____ Isaac Asimov

74 Special Delivery _____ Lee Wallingford &
Carol Deppe

85 The Hemstitch Notebooks _____ John M. Ford

Departments

4 Editorial: Playboy? _____ Isaac Asimov

9 Letters _____

14 Neat Stuff _____ Matthew J. Costello

192 The SF Conventional Calendar _____ Erwin S. Strauss

Poems by Bruce Boston and Robert Frazier

Cover art by Michael Whelan

Isaac Asimov: Editorial Director

Gardner Dozois: Editor

Sheila Williams: Managing Editor

Joel Davis: President

William F. Battista: Publisher

Published 13 times a year by Davis Publications, Inc. at \$2.00 per copy (\$2.50 per copy in Canada). Annual subscription of thirteen issues \$25.97 in the United States and U.S. possessions. In all other countries \$30.67, payable in advance in U.S. funds. Address for subscriptions and all other correspondence about them, P.O. Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566. For back issues send \$3.50 to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462. Address for all editorial matters: Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10017. Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine® is the registered trademark of Davis Publications, Inc. © 1989 by Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A. Protection secured under the Universal and Pan American Copyright Conventions. Reproduction or use of editorial or pictorial content in any manner without express permission is prohibited. All submissions must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope; the publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Second class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. POSTMASTER, send change of address to ISAFM, Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566. In Canada return to 1801 South Cameron, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3E1. ISSN 0162-2188.

EDITORIAL



by Isaac Asimov

PLAYBOY?

I am sometimes criticized for making these editorials too personal, and for talking about myself too much. On the other hand, judging by the letters I receive and the interviews to which I am subjected, there seems to be an absolutely insatiable curiosity about me and my peculiarities.

And every once in a while, I am surprised right out of my socks, when someone comes up with a question I have not heard before.

Thus, I got involved in a discussion on word-rates. Someone said that the science fiction magazines were still paying the same word-rates they paid fifty years ago. This is an outright distortion, since my own stories sell to the science fiction magazines at just twelve times the word-rate at which they sold fifty years ago.

The other party sneered at this in a rather unpleasant manner and pointed out that as a "superstar" (his term) I received more than others and even so it wasn't much. He said, "If you'd submitted that story to *Playboy* and it was accepted, you would have received at least \$5,000, the minimum they now pay for fiction."

In other words, *Playboy* would pay me at least eight times as much for a particular story as *Asimov's* would, so why don't I write for *Playboy*?

No one had ever asked me that question before, and I had never considered the matter, so, for a moment, I had to think.

My first impulse, of course, was to get on my moral high-horse and announce that I wouldn't write for *Playboy* because I disapproved of "girlie" magazines, but that would be a lie. Worse, it would be a lie that would be easily nailed.

You see, I disapprove of "girlie" magazines only to the extent that I don't buy them myself and I find myself filled with ennui when someone sends one to me. (Believe it or not, I know what unclothed women look like, and don't need photographs to remind me.) However, I don't disapprove of such magazines in general. If people enjoy them, let them buy them. I wouldn't dream of infringing on their liberty to do so.

What's more, I have written an occasional essay for *Penthouse* and I've written a series of thirty-three mysteries for *Gallery*, both of which

magazines contain acres of bare feminine skin. I see nothing wrong with that, for it enabled me to reach an audience I don't ordinarily reach, with essays and stories that were exactly the kind I always write. (Before undertaking the mystery series I told the editor that I did not write erotica and he told me I didn't have to, and kept his word).

So if I write for *Penthouse* and *Gallery*, why don't I write for *Playboy*?

And as I thought of it, the reason became clear in my head and it turned out to be childishly simple.

Playboy isn't asking me to write anything. At least, they once did, back in 1964. They wanted a short-short, and I wrote it and they rejected it. (No problem. I sold it to *F & SF* for one-tenth what *Playboy* had offered, and I was perfectly content.) But they've never asked again—so I've never written for them again.

As a matter of fact, that is really the way it all works for me. In the first three years of my writing career, I wrote stories and peddled them, in the sense that I sent them to various magazines and hoped for the best. After "Nightfall" was published in 1941, however, everything changed. From then on, I never peddled anything again. I wrote only on order.

Naturally, *Astounding Science Fiction*, my prime market in those days, didn't order individual stories. John Campbell simply made it clear that he would welcome any-

ISAAC ASIMOV:

Editorial Director

GARDNER DOZOIS:

Editor

SHEILA WILLIAMS:

Managing Editor

IAN RANDAL STROCK:

Editorial Assistant

RALPH RUBINO:

Corporate Art Director

TERRI CZECZKO:

Associate Art Director

ANTHONY BARI:

Junior Designer

ROBERT TEXTER:

Junior Designer

CAROLE DIXON:

Production Director

JUDY S. BROWN:

Production Assistant

CYNTHIA MANSON:

Director of Marketing and Subsidiary Rights

CHRISTIAN DORBANDT:

Marketing and Subsidiary Rights Manager

FLORENCE B. EICHIN:

Permissions & Contracts Manager

SONYA C. BUCKMAN:

Circulation Director Retail

Marketing

SUSAN GREENE

Newsstand Promotion Manager

BRIAN McKEON:

Circulation Planning Director

LAURA GUTH:

Circulation Director Subscriptions

LISA FEERICK:

Advertising Coordinator

IRENE BOZOKI:

Classified Advertising Manager

ADVERTISING OFFICES

NEW YORK

(212) 557-9100

WILLIAM F. BATTISTA:

Publisher

JOEL DAVIS

President

FRED EDINGER

Senior Vice President

Finance

PAULA COLLINS

Senior Vice President

Circulation

CARL BARTEE

Vice President

Manufacturing

Please do not send us your manuscript until you've gotten a copy of our manuscript guidelines. To obtain this, send us a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope (what stationery stores call a number 10 envelope), and a note requesting this information. Please write "manuscript guidelines" on the bottom left-hand corner of the outside envelope. The address for this and for all editorial correspondence is *Isfm*, Davis Publications, Inc. 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10017. While we're always looking for new writers, please, in the interest of time-saving, find out what we're looking for, and how to prepare it, before submitting your story.

EDITORIAL: PLAYBOY?

5

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing I sent him (no guarantee of acceptance, of course), so I felt there was a standing order at ASF. The same happened at other science fiction magazines and, eventually, at such magazines as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

In 1949, Doubleday asked me to contribute something that might be suitable for a novel, and I did, and they published *Pebble in the Sky* in 1950. After that, they had a standing order for me to contribute whatever I wished and they have by now published 106 books of mine.

Of course, this all seems to indicate a peculiar lack of aggressiveness on my part. I wait for people to come to me, instead of going out after them and finding the best-paying markets and making huge deals and becoming very, very rich. If I had an agent, that's exactly what the agent would do—and that's why I don't have an agent. I like it my own way.

You see, I don't write for money primarily; I write for love. If I were an aggressive writer, I could make as much money as I do while writing only one-tenth as much as I do, but no, thank you. If I were to write only one-tenth as much as I do, what on Earth would I do with the other nine-tenths of my life?

Well, then, I might continue to write as much as I do, but by studying the market, and following the changing public taste, and finding the right publishers and making big deals, I could increase my in-

come ten-fold. —But I don't want that, either.

I don't want to cut and slash my writing to suit the kind of stuff that happens to please the public at the moment. I want to write what pleases *me*. I write old-fashioned science fiction and old-fashioned mysteries, without violence or clinical sex, without vulgarisms or hard-boiled talk. And I write science books and essays without sensationalism and with careful attention to detail. And my own editors and publishers take it, because they are committed to publishing me as I want to be published. It makes for a quiet and happy life for me, and I'd rather have that than a trillion-dollar deal.

Of course, I don't want any of you to cry in your beer because you feel that I'm deliberately keeping myself poor as a matter of principle. Actually, I'm not, because things have worked out in a rather odd way that I don't suppose I could ever have predicted.

By writing a great deal of all sorts of things, I have inadvertently become known to a great many people, and have also developed the reputation of being able to write on almost any subject very quickly and quite reliably.

The result is that there are many, many places in the United States (and in some foreign countries as well) where editors find they need a particular story or essay of good quality very quickly and they wonder where to get it and someone is

Return to the magic, the romance, the adventure
found only in the world of the catlike mrem

In a world where lithe warriors fight with tooth and claw,
and cunning sorcerers cast the deadliest of spells—
the incredible adventure continues...

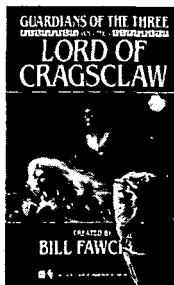
GUARDIANS OF THE THREE

***** VOLUME II *****

KEEPER OF THE CITY

BY PETER MORWOOD AND DIANE DUANE

CREATED
BY **BILL
FAWCETT**



Don't miss
Volume I
of this
exciting
series



BANTAM
NEW YORK • BOSTON • LONDON • TORONTO • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bound to say, "How about Isaac Asimov?"

As a result I have received orders for stories or essays in recent years from such places as *EDN*, *Finding the Right Speaker*, *Time*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Field Newspaper Syndicate*, *Cape Publications*, *New Age Journal*, *TDC*, *Natura*, *Discover*, *Chemical Engineering Progress*, *American Film*, *Final Frontier*, *Private Clubs* (who wanted a four-part mystery), *Impact*, *Creative Living*, *Union Carbide World*, *PC Computing*, *Endless Vacation*, *Longevity*, *Ameritech*, and so on almost endlessly. Right now, in fact, I have on order an essay for *Working Mother*.

I don't make any effort to find these outlets, you understand; most of the time I don't even know they exist. *They find me*. And when they do, I ask three questions:

1.) What do you want me to write about? (Even if they're asking for fiction, they usually have some theme they want me to deal with.)

2.) When do you want it? (It is almost certain they want it quickly. In fact, once when an editor called me and was particularly urgent about it, I said, with a touch of cynicism, "You wouldn't be asking *me* for it, unless you were in a hurry. When do you want it?" And he said,

"Well, actually, tomorrow." —And he got it, too.)

And 3.) What are you willing to pay for it?

Now I never suggest a payment. *They* have to. And once they do, I never argue about it. If the offer justifies my working on the job, I accept; otherwise I don't. Naturally, if what they want me to write is particularly interesting or particularly challenging, a smaller offer than usual is likely to serve as justification, but that is entirely for me to decide. I say either "Yes" or "No" and there's no dickering.

However, it's very often "Yes," because editors are sensible people. They know perfectly well that I am a very busy writer and that, at any given time, I have my desk piled high and cannot be easily lured. So they bid high, and usually come up with *Playboy* word rates or better.

So here is my answer to the question as to why I don't write for *Playboy*. 1.) I probably would if they asked me to, and 2.) I don't care if they *don't* ask me to, because I have fifty outlets that pay me as well or better.

But no matter how much money I make or how high a word-rate I command, I will still continue to write for the magazines I have loved all my life, those same magazines that have made all this possible for me. —And I will do so for whatever they are willing to pay me, and will never ask more. ●



LETTERS

Mr. Asimov;

Please, give us a break. Your November editorial was an insult to your readers' intelligence.

Your insistence that none of your stories are accepted because of your name reveals that you are truly naïve regarding how the world works.

I don't suggest that *all* of your stories are accepted solely due to your prominence; however, if a tale happens to be of borderline quality, the name Isaac Asimov could well make the difference.

Although I've only read two of your George and Azazel stories, I found both of them boring, unworthy of being published in any respectable science fiction periodical. If they seem frivolous or humorous to you, then you must possess a rather simple sense of humor.

You should try submitting your stories under an assumed name; of course, that would rule out stories which would be connected with you as the author, but I would bet that you would have a much more difficult time getting them published.

Joseph Spicatum
Missoula, MT

If my stories were accepted only because of my name, I would never get any rejections, but I do. I'm sorry you don't like my George and Azazel

stories, but I tell you what. Just give in to all the requests you must get to please edit some magazine. Once you become an editor, you can reject every single story I send you. How about that?

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Isaac Asimov:

A letter in the November issue of *IASfm* talked about what science fiction can contain. It is correct about the fact that science fiction can contain matter about greater than light speeds or other impossibilities. In your book *Fantastic Voyage II: Destination Brain*, you deal with the concept of miniaturization. Now, miniaturization is an impossibility, but in a book or a short story, anything can be made possible. If someone publishes a book dealing with an impossibility of current science, does that mean that their book is immediately dubbed science fantasy?

I don't think anyone can rightfully say that there are guidelines for science fiction, except that it has premonitions of the future or a scientific phenomenon; of course, it must contain fiction. In general, science fiction tells how the future could be, good or bad. If the projected future is "bad," then the story would serve as a warning.

And if a "good" future is projected, then the story serves as a guide. Though some may disagree with this or other definitions of science fiction, a definition of science fiction lies in the mind of the reader, and not the critics. Sincerely,

Jason Gillis
Portland, OR

You can do anything you wish in science fiction, provided you make it sound scientifically plausible. I went to a lot of trouble to make miniaturization sound scientifically plausible. Of course, the only way you can do this effectively is to know something about science. If a writer knows nothing about science, he runs the same kind of risks that I would run if I wrote a football story. (Have you noticed that I don't write football stories?)

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov;

Let me start by stating something I imagine you've heard before, and that you will hear again: I've been a fan of yours ever since I read my first robot story ("Robbie the Robot")—the name has slipped away) way back in fifth grade. And further, no matter how many mistakes you make in the future, nothing could possibly tarnish the luster of your existing work. However . . .

Two days ago, I literally squealed with delight when I saw the ads for the movie *Nightfall*, adapted from your wonderful story. In spite of Hollywood's miserable track record in science fiction, wild horses could not have kept me away. Tonight, my wife and I went to see it, and

I'm sorry to say that this was the first movie I've ever walked out of. When we left, about forty-five minutes into the flick, about a third of the audience had already gone home—another first in my experience.

Now I'm sure you've seen the movie, so I don't need to go into its flaws—the substitution of mysticism for rationality, the addition of a gratuitous love story, inaudible dialog, the tacky low-budget set—but, since your name was emblazoned on the ads for the movie, I do have a request. I DON'T feel that you owe the science fiction community an apology, Hollywood being what it is, but I do think an explanation is in order: How could you ever have allowed them to put your name on this travesty? And further, who should I write at Concorde to protest the butchering of your work?

Respectfully yours,

Jim Johnson
Chandler, AZ

For goodness' sake, I had nothing to do with the sale of "Nightfall" to the movies. Doubleday sold it, in good faith, expecting a decent movie. I had nothing to do with the making of it in any way. I was in no way involved. From all I hear about it (I have never seen the movie, and don't want to), I have been victimized. Yet I am being scolded from all sides.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Isaac,

In the November 1988 *IASfm*, responding to a reader, you observe that the sound barrier and the

light-speed barrier are two completely different things, respectively an engineering problem and a law of nature. True, of course; but "laws of nature" are only human formulations of what we observe and deduce, subject to change as our knowledge grows. Thus Einstein himself showed that Newton's laws of motion required some modification.

As you doubtless know, similar advances are now being made beyond Einstein's work. For one, the theoretical physicist Frank Tipler showed, about a dozen years ago, that a kind of faster-than-light travel and even a kind of time travel are mathematically compatible with general relativity. They may well remain physical impossibilities; for one thing, they seem to require matter more dense by many orders of magnitude than anything we now believe could be. However, they are no longer logical absurdities, in the sense that perfect simultaneous knowledge of the position and momentum of a particle is a logical absurdity. (Heisenberg's uncertainty principle derives mathematically from the premises of wave mechanics.) And who knows what phenomena experimental physicists may come upon in the future? Black holes do look very suggestive—

I agree that faster-than-light remains highly speculative and that today we cannot write really "hard" science fiction about it. But it is not ridiculous to think that maybe our descendants will someday be able to.

Regards,

Poul Anderson
Orinda, CA

Actually, Poul, the novel I am now writing deals with (among other things) the discovery of faster-than-light travel so I'm not being hard-nosed about the matter. Nevertheless, by the law of conservation of viewpoint, I am as conservative scientifically as I am liberal politically and socially, so I continue to view real faster-than-light travel with the greatest skepticism.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov,

Your editorial (Nov. '88) on Frivolity (a pejorative word for Humor employed by those who lack a sense thereof) reminded me of a recent incident. I had occasion to recall and wish to reread a hilarious short story, a parody of the Conan stories, which I had read some years ago. It had appeared, I believed, in *IASfm*—probably during the years of George Scithers' editorship. Certainly it wasn't during the lugubrious, deadly serious era of Kathleen Moloney!

To find it I had only to turn to my shelf of *IASfms*, which stretches back to May '79, and flip through the Tables of Contents or read the first few lines of any likely story. The project should only take an hour or so, right?

Wrong! I never did find that story, but that's not the reason the search took all day. I just couldn't resist the temptation to reread every rollicking limerick, every Ferdinand Feghoot fable, every outrageous pun, every Nurse Terra Tarkington tale, every Improbable Bestiary entry, and every other bit of inspired frivolity which you printed in those glorious days. It

was a rediscovery of that which had hooked me on your magazine in the first place!

Why oh why did you have to change?

It's not that I don't appreciate the serious literary effort which plumbs the dregs of life, both in the present and the possible future. But it is that rare light touch, that occasional humorous approach to science fiction, which delights me most. I've been pleased to see that a bit of it has been cautiously edging its way back into your pages under the Chestertonian Gardner Dozois.

Please, Dr. A, in your capacity as "faculty advisor" tell him not to be bashful about it. Let him know that the reappearance of Ferdinand Feghoot and Terra Tarkington and their ilk (as well as good old George and Azazel), or their latter-day counterparts, would be welcomed by this faithful reader—and, I suspect, by many others. Yours for more of Falstaff and less of Henry,

Frank A. Rhuland, Jr.
Rindge, NH

Well, we do our best, but you know every editor (who's worth anything) makes his own mark. George Scithers was good old George Scithers and Gardner can't make himself be George, and we wouldn't want him to. George couldn't make himself be Gardner, either. I'm sure a light-hearted item that's good enough would be acceptable. He makes no trouble concerning my George and Azazel stories and I assure you he's perfectly free to reject them.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Doctor:

I have been an avid science fiction fan from way back. My favorite SF author years ago was E.E. ("Doc") Smith. I read every novel of his that I could get my hands on. I still have his Skylark and Lensmen series on my library shelves along with many of the contemporary authors of his time.

Today you are my favorite SF author. Your Foundation series is terrific. I hope there will be more.

I have been subscribing to *IASfm* for some time, on and off, as my schedule allowed time for reading.

I have one question: On what basis was Melanie Tem's "Chameleon" (March 1988 issue) selected for inclusion in the magazine? It is a well-written story, but in no way can I see the science fiction angle? Or am I stupid?

Harold M. Werner
Olmstead Twsp., OH

"Chameleon," to my way of thinking, is a rather eerie fantasy. We include a fantasy now and then if it's good enough and if it makes a sufficient impression on us. The story is certainly not easily forgettable.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov,

I should have written this letter in February, but somehow I missed reading your February, 1988 editorial until Mr. Douglas Van Fleet's letter in the latest issue brought it to my attention. So this is late. I hope it is not too late.

I would like to second Mr. Van Fleet's request that you publish your essay on genetic counseling

in its entirety. I would further ask that you publish it as widely as possible. I believe that the information you offer should be available to, and understood by, every potential parent. What he or she chooses to do with that information is, of course, up to that individual.

My feelings on this topic come from firsthand experience. After the death of a daughter, my wife and I were advised to seek genetic counseling. What we learned was not encouraging. We found ourselves facing the same series of hard choices that you listed in your essay, but at least we knew what we faced. Knowing that much, we could temper our emotions with reason, and that, in turn, freed us to make the decisions we had to make. Without that counseling, I know our marriage and our lives would not be as happy as they are today.

You told Mr. Van Fleet that the essence of your article was quoted

in the February editorial and therefore it had escaped the censors. I disagree. *IAsfm* is a great magazine and it enjoys an intelligent and sizable readership, but I do not think you meant your essay for *IAsfm*. I think you intended to reach a much larger audience, and until you do, I think that the censors still have you by the throat. Please pry those fingers loose and let your message be heard. Both the message and the principle are too important to let things stay as they are.

Thank you for the sounding board.

James C. Douglass
Boulder City, CO

Don't worry, I'll get it published somewhere else someday. I write so much and for so many diverse publications that nothing can possibly escape for long.

—Isaac Asimov

THE SOUL POTTER OF CETI NINE

Massless and thin she bends like a weed
holds a pivot on her wobbly hind knees
the clay plug flattens against a ritual
kneading stone & with expert emotions
her double palms mix into it
the cremation ashes as a grog—
her firstborn son worked in clay

—Robert Frazier

NEAT STUFF

by Matthew J.
Costello

Recently I completed a history of the SF film for which I had promised to uncover some of the hidden gems of the genre. And while I was able to bring to light a few neglected masterpieces, such as Fritz Lang's *Die Frau in Mond* and Nicholas Roeg's restored *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, there were ones that got away.

Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Paramount, 1932) hadn't been shown for decades and there didn't seem to be an easy explanation for that. While the Frederic March interpretation of Robert Louis Stevenson's mad doctor may not have been a lost classic, critics who had seen both said it was undoubtedly superior to the Ingrid Bergman/Spencer Tracy version (MGM, 1941) directed by Victor Fleming.

And while a few dealers in unauthorized tapes claimed to have complete versions of the film, a legal copy wasn't available from Paramount or MCA, the current owner of the copyright.

I eventually learned the reason. Apparently March's Mr. Hyde is a grotesque caricature with decidedly racial overtones. Many films of the thirties played loose and nasty with racial stereotypes and this film carried that to the limit,

with Hyde's unbridled lust pricking white sensibilities.

And I can understand Paramount's decision. But if we can admire the quality of filmmaking in D.W. Griffith's paeon to the Ku Klux Klan and the values of the Old South, *The Birth of a Nation*, than surely we can look at depression era bigotry as it touched SF films. (The screenplay is available in the *Film Classic Library*, edited by Richard J. Anobile, with 1400 frame blow-ups.)

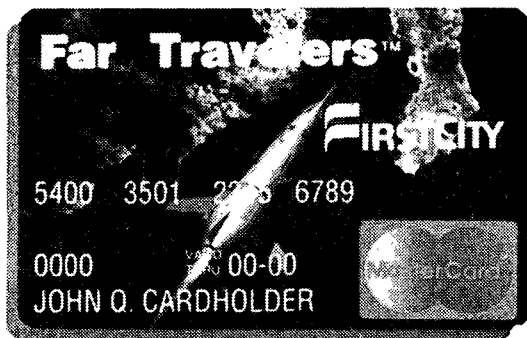
But another film, once presumed lost, did pop up and it's a delight. *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* (77 minutes, Technicolor, available from MGM-UA, 10000 Washington Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232) was thought to have been destroyed at the time the 1953 3-D remake, *House of Wax*, was released. A British publicist requested a print to compare the two films. He never watched the 1933 film and destroyed his copy.

Except that he had been sent the master negative.

Since *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* had been filmed in the early two-color Technicolor process, expensive duplicate negatives had not been struck. The film, well

(Continued on page 39)

The Shape of Things to Come



As a reader of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* you are keenly interested in the shape of things to come, our potential futures, and how science and technology will affect the spectrum of human experience.

Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine challenges its readers to speculate beyond the mundane and day-to-day. We want our readers to ponder, question and debate the impact scientific inquiry and discovery will have on the way humans live, relate to one another (as individuals and nations), conserve their environment, and express themselves intellectually and artistically.

The Shape of Things to Come

In a world of mundane credit cards, the "Far Travelers" MasterCard is the only credit card created exclusively for readers of science fiction.

The unique design identifies you as an individual committed to the exploration of human potential.

When you use the "Far Travelers" MasterCard, you will help ensure humanity's continued Far Travels into space because...

Every time you buy something with the "Far Travelers" MasterCard, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* will contribute a percentage of the price to the National Space Society.

The "Far Travelers" MasterCard is the only credit card that enables you to deepen humanity's commitment to the exploration of space.

- **There's no annual fee for one full year!**
- A competitive variable interest rate of prime plus 7.7%.
- 25-day interest-free grace period on purchases when your balance is paid in full each month.
- Instant Cash at ATMs and bank locations throughout the world.
- \$250,000 Travel Accident Insurance at no extra cost.

AND

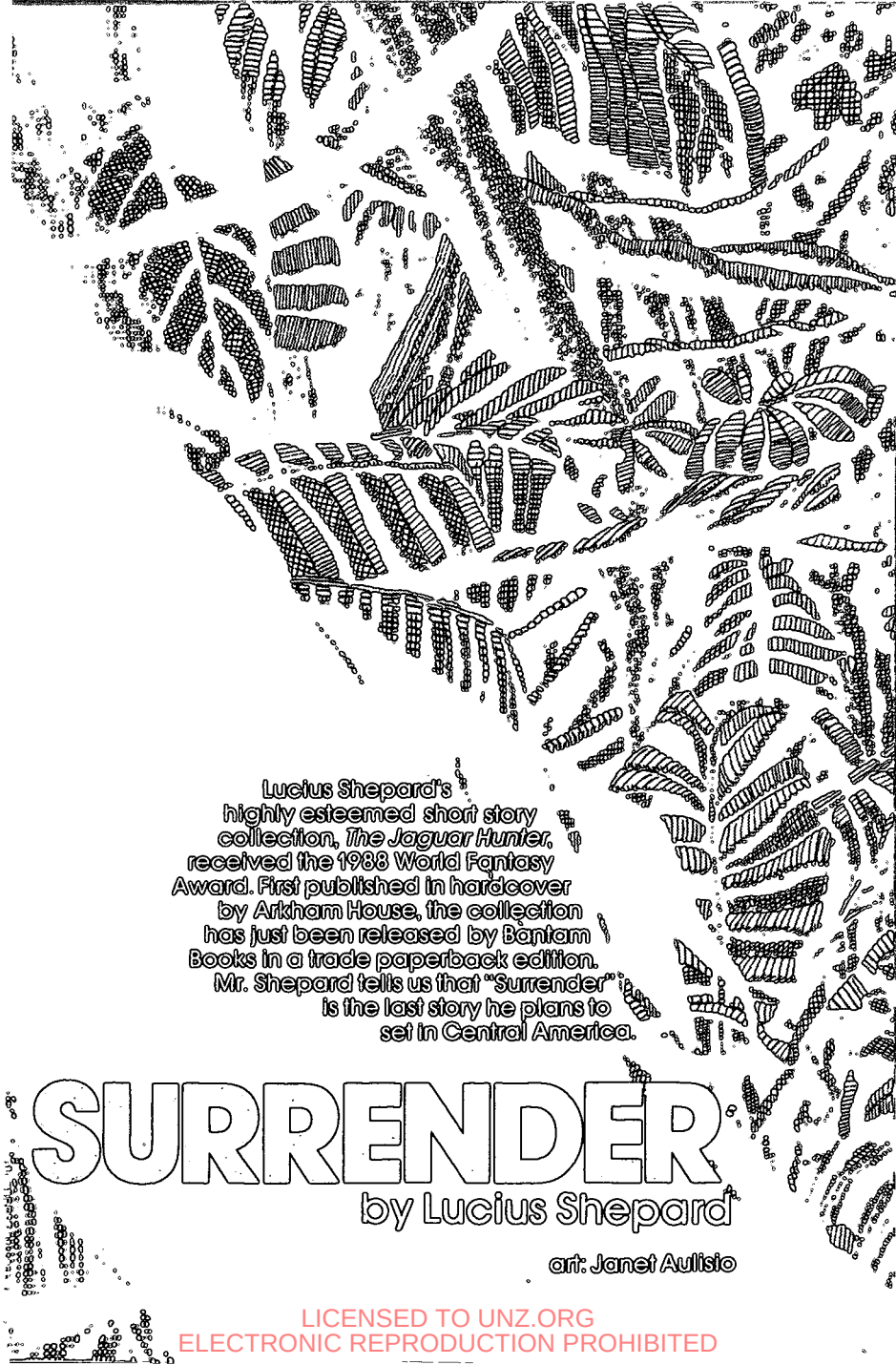
- **Special discounts on science fiction books and related merchandise.**

If you would like an application, please call (800) 641-7878.

FIRSTCITY

First City Bank - Sioux Falls, N.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Lucius Shepard's
highly esteemed short story
collection, *The Jaguar Hunter*,
received the 1988 World Fantasy
Award. First published in hardcover
by Arkham House, the collection
has just been released by Bantam
Books in a trade paperback edition.
Mr. Shepard tells us that "Surrender"
is the last story he plans to
set in Central America.

SURRENDER

by Lucius Shepard

art: Janet Aullisio



I've been down these rivers before, I've smelled this tropical stink in a dozen different wars, this mixture of heat and fever and diarrhea, I've come across the same bloated bodies floating in the green water, I've seen the tiny dark men and their delicate women hacked apart a hundred times if I've seen it once. I'm a fucking war tourist. My bags have stickers on them from Cambodia, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Laos, El Salvador, and all the other pertinent points of no return. I keep telling myself, enough of this bullshit, your turn to cover the homefront, where nobody gives a damn and you can write happy stories about girls with cute tits and no acting ability, in-depth features on spirit channeling and the latest in three-piece Republicans who do it to the public doggie-style and never lose that winning smile, but I always end up here again, whichever Here is in this year, sitting around the pool at the Holiday Inn and soaking up Absolut and exchanging cynical repartee with other halfwits of my breed, guys from UPI or AP, stringers from Reuters, and the odd superstar who'll drop by from time to time, your Fill-In-The-Name-Of-Your-Favorite-Blow-Dried TV Creep, the kind of guy who'll buy a few rounds, belch platitudes, and say crap like, Now Katanga, there was a *real* war, before going upstairs drunk to dictate three columns of tearstained human interest. I used to believe that I kept doing all this because I was committed, not a pervert or deluded, but I'm not too sure about that anymore.

A few years back I was in Guatemala City: Mordor with more sunshine and colonial architecture, diesel buses farting black smoke and a truly spectacular slum which goes by the nineties style name of Zone Five. I was just hanging out, doing yet another tragic piece on the disappeared, dodging carloads of sinister-looking hombres in unmarked Toyotas and pretending to myself that what I was going to write would Make A Difference, when this colleague of mind, Paul DeVries, AP, a skinny, earnest little guy with whom all the Guatemalan girls are in love because he's blond and sensitive and in every way the opposite of the local talent, who tend early on to develop beer guts along with a mania for sidearms and a penchant for left-hooking the weaker sex . . . DeVries says to me, "Hey, Carl, let's haul our butts down to Sayaxché, I hear there's been some kinda fuck-up down there."

"Sayaxché?" I say. "What could happen in Sayaxché?"

Sayaxché's a joke between me and DeVries, one of many; we've been covering backfence wars together for four years, and we've achieved a rapport based on making light of every little thing that comes our way. We call Sayaxché "the one-whore town," because that's how many ladies of the evening it supports, and she's no bargain, with acne scars and a dumpling gut and a foul mouth, screaming drunk all the time. The town itself is a dump on the edge of the Peteñ rain forest, with a hotel, a

regional bank office, whitewashed hovels, an experimental agricultural farm, a ferry that carries oil trucks across the Río de la Pasión on their way to service the ranches farther east in the jungle, lots of dark green, lots of starving Indians, Joseph Conradland, what could happen?

"Forget it," I tell DeVries at first.

But I'm getting fatigued with the disappeared, you know, I mean what's the point, if they'd been disappeared by magic everyone would love to hear about it, but another tragedy, more endless nattering of miserable Third World gossip . . . ho hum, and so I end up hopping a DC-3 for Flores with DeVries, then it's a bus ride on a potholed dirt road for an hour, and we are there, drinking beer and smoking on the screened verandah of the Hotel Tropical, a turquoise cube on the riverbank with three-dollar rooms and enormous cockroaches and framed photographs everywhere of Don Julio, the owner, a roan-colored man with gold chains and a paunch, posing proudly with a rifle and a variety of dead animals. We're listening to ooh-ooh-ah-ah birds and howler monkeys from the surrounding jungle, staring at the murky green eddies of the River of Passion, trying to pry some information out of Don Julio, but he has heard of no fuck-up. He's a real stand-up guy, Don Julio. Hates commies. One of those patriotic souls who will in drunken moments flourish his mighty pistola and declaim, "Nobody takes this from me! A communist comes on my land, and he's a dead man." And so he's doubtless lying to us in order to protect his pals, the secret police. He shrugs, offers more beer, and goes off to polish his bullets, leaving me and DeVries and a Canadian nurse named Sherril—she's on her way south to do volunteer work with the Sandinistas—to indulge in the town's chief spectator sport, which is watching the oil trucks rolling off the ferry getting stuck in this enormous pothole, which is artfully placed at the end of the dock and the beginning of a steep incline so that it's the rare truck that avoids getting stuck. In front of the bank across the street, a two-story building of pink cement block, some Indian soldiers with camo gear and SMGs are advising the driver of the current truck-in-distress on possible methods of becoming unstuck; they favor a combination of boards and sand beneath the tires, and rocking back and forth. The driver, who's been frustrated now for more than an hour, is close to tears.

"Well, this is fucking terrific," I say to DeVries; he's ten years younger than me, and our relationship has been established so that I have the right to express stern fraternal disapproval. "There's no end of newsworthy material to be found here."

"Something might turn up," he says. "Let's hang for a while and see what surfaces."

"What're you guys looking for?" Sherril asks. She's long, she's tall, she's looking good, she's got light brown hair and no bra, and she's

waiting for this guy who promised to paddle her upriver to the Mexican border to see the Mayan ruins at Yaxchilan but hasn't showed up yet and, being two days late, probably won't show at all; she acts very engaged-disengaged, very feminine-in-control, like I want to do my thing with the rebels so I can live with myself, you know, and then raise my children to love animals and never say bad words in Calgary or somewhere, and me, I'm beginning to think that if she's stupid enough to go paddling up the River of Doom with some sleaze she met in an Antigua bar, she'll be idealistic enough to choose to sleep with a wartorn journalist such as myself. I can tell she's impressed by my repertoire of cynicisms, and there is definitely a mutual attraction.

"We heard there was some trouble here," I say. "Soldiers all over."

"Oh, you must mean out at the farm," she says.

DeVries and I exchange glances and say as one, "What happened?"

"I don't know," she says, "but a lot of soldiers were out there the other day. I think they're still there. They'd have to come back through here if they left."

The farm is, like Sayaxche, a kind of joke, though not so funny as the one-whore bit. Some years before in a canny exercise of graft, the Banco Americano Desarrollo, the leading development bank in the region and thus first among many in the economic villainy that maintains the status quo of death squads and inhuman poverty throughout Central America, all in the cause of keeping the USA safe from Communism, negotiated an agreement with the then chief of corruption in Guatemala, a president by the name of Ydigoras Fuentes; this agreement traded the rights in perpetuity to oil leases in the Peten in return for what the agreement called an aggressive US policy directed toward land reform and agricultural development, a policy that—behind a veil of wonderfully vague promises—actually promised only to establish one experimental farm, this being the one in Sayaxche. It employs thirty Guatemalans and is considered a model of sanitation and efficiency; land reform and agricultural development are, needless to say, still a good ways off.

Wellsir, DeVries and I are hot to trot on out to the farm and see what's cooking, but Sherril tells us we'll never make it . . . not in the daytime, anyway. Too many soldiers blocking the roads. She knows a way, however; if we wait until night, she'll take us. It seems that while waiting for her tardy tour guide, she ran into a right-wing nasty from Guat City who owned a ranch downriver and was dumb enough to go for a jungle walk with him. All he talked of were the discos, Cadillacs, his many girlfriends, and she thought him a fool, not recognizing that such fools are dangerous. When he tried to put a move on her, she was forced to run away and lose him in the jungle, and so discovered a nifty secret

YOU'LL BE PUBLISHED IF YOU WIN!

***Here's the Opportunity Aspiring Writers
and Illustrators Have been Looking For!***

\$4000 Grand Prizes Recognition Professional Advice

If you want to be a published SF writer, you should know about the internationally praised L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of The Future Contest. And now there's a companion contest for new illustrators! The Co-ordinating Judge is Frank Kelly-Freas, the dean of SF art and the Director of Illustration for the famed annual book of Contest stories!

Co-ordinating Judge of the new-writers' Contest, and editor of the annual *L. Ron Hubbard Presents WRITERS OF THE FUTURE* anthology, is Algis Budrys. If you can write or illustrate SF, they're waiting for your entry.

Cash awards of \$500 and up. Grand Prize winners and others receive an offer of additional money for publication in the best-selling SF anthology series. You'll also have won free professional instruction in your chosen field.

***No entry fee or obligation in either Contest!
Judges' panels made up of today's top professionals!
Find Out More About it!***

Send a Stamped, Self-addressed envelope to:

**L. Ron Hubbard's
Illustrators of The Future®
Contest**
2210 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 203
Santa Monica,
CA 90403

**L. Ron Hubbard's
Writers of The Future®
Contest**
P.O. Box 1630
Los Angeles,
CA 90078

***These Contests are part of a comprehensive talent-nurturing
program founded in 1983 by L. Ron Hubbard, one of the most
acclaimed and widely read authors of all time.***

**"One of science fiction's all-time giants opening the way for a new
generation of exciting talent!" --Robert Silverberg**

Copyright © 1989 Bridge Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. WRITERS OF THE FUTURE
and ILLUSTRATORS OF THE FUTURE are trademarks owned by L. Ron Hubbard Library.

**LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED**

route to Ye Olde Experimental Farm, which appeared to be heavily guarded.

There are journalistic ethics involved here, we realize. Should two guys who're wise to the way of the world let this naive Calgarette lead us into the mouth of hell at the risk of her all and everything? Probably not. But this is show biz, right, and so, rationalizing the shit out of the situation, we say, okay, honey, what an adventure we'll have! We drink beers, watching oil trucks buck and hump in the Pothole of Death, and we wait for nightfall. Toward dusk I take a little walk with Sherril, tell her sad stories about the death of grunts, and am rewarded for my valorous past by several deep wet kisses and proof positive of her no-bralessness. "God!" she says, flushed and dewy with delight, as we stroll arm in arm toward the hotel. "God, I never expected to meet somebody like you in this awful place." There is, I realize, vast potential here. Who says Canadians can't kiss?

At this point it all stopped being a joke. It really hadn't been much of a joke up until then, but this is show biz, right, and I just wanted to get you to here. I don't know what to tell you people. I'm probably coming off in all this as wearing the moral superiority hat, but it's only defensiveness. See, I'm just so used to waxing passionate and having you look down your noses at me as if to say, Interesting Specimen, or My Goodness, he's certainly opinionated, or Yawn, boring, so the West is in decline, so what, know where we can cop some Ecstasy, or Jeez, I mean it's too bad and all, but I don't wanna hear it, I work hard all the livelong while that lucky old sun just rolls 'round heaven all day, and when I get home at night, I wanna kick back, pop a cold one and be entertained. So what do I tell you people? I can't argue with you. You either give a shit or you don't, and nothing I say is going to change your mind. But if it's entertainment you want, I suggest you take a walk around, say, the vicinity of Tolola in El Salvador, where you can see the intriguing results of a foreign policy which has Apache helicopters dropping forty thousand pounds of bombs on the countryside every month, repeating the tactic we used in Vietnam to destroy popular support for the VC (oh, yeah!), in this case, the FMLN, and in the process causing one-fifth of an entire nation to become refugees. It would be a most entertaining walk. See the empty towns littered with skeletons! See the curious collection of left hands rotting in a basket in front of the bombed church! See the village of legless men! If you liked *The Killing Fields*, you'll love Tolola!

Seriously, folks, it will live in your memory.

The smell alone will make it an Experience.

But I digress. Maybe the fact is that in the United States it's become easy to achieve moral superiority, even for fuck-ups like myself. In that

case, I suppose I would do well to finish my story quickly and let you get back to your MTV.

. Off we went, trudging through the jungle, following Sherril's perfect denim-clad butt through the slimy night air. It took us almost two hours of steady humping to reach the farm, vampire mosquitos, creepy scuttlings, and when we spotted lights shining through the foliage, we crept up to the margin of the jungle, went flat on our stomachs and peered through a bed of ferns. Personnel carriers with M-60s mounted on the rear, about a dozen altogether, ringed a one-story building of white stucco: the farm office. The lights proved to be spotlights and were aimed at a field of what appeared to be agave . . . though God only knew why anyone would want to cultivate agave. About fifty or sixty soldiers were visible, and none of them looked to be having big fun; they were all on alert, fanned out in front of the office, their guns trained on the field. It was very weird.

I don't know what we would have done. Nothing, probably. No way I was planning to get any closer. The chances are we would have gone back to town and done a little investigative reporting. But free will did not turn out to be an option. A few minutes after we had reached the farm I heard at my back the distinctive snick of an automatic weapon being readied for fire, and then a voice telling us in Spanish to lie with our faces down and our arms spread. Moments later, we were hauled to our feet, blinded with flashlights, and, despite crying, "*Americanos, Americanos,*" we were herded roughly by a group of soldiers toward the farm and into the office building. Laid out in the dirt beside the door was one of your basic Central American vistas: a row of bullet-riddled naked bodies. The soldiers hustled us past the bodies before we could get a good look at them. Sherril started to object, but I pushed her along, whispering for her to keep quiet. Inside, we were met by another basic CA element, your sadist officer, this one a major named Pedroza who would have scored high in a General Noriega lookalike contest: the pitted skin, the vaguely oriental cast to the features. He gazed dreamily at us, visions of cattle prods and Louisville Sluggers dancing in his head; his eyes lingered upon Sherril.

It may seem that I was leaping to conclusions concerning the major, but not really. He had attained high rank in one of the most conscienceless and brutal military forces in existence, and one does not do that without having caused a world of torment; his face had the cruel sleekness of someone who has indulged in torture and enjoyed it. There is a slowness, a heaviness attaching to such men, a bulky slovenly grace like that of an overfed jungle predator, one whose kills have come too often and too easily. To anyone who has seen them in action, they are inimitable;

their evil dispositions as manifest as are their beribboned and bemedaled chests.

Pedroza asked us a number of questions and was, I believe, about to begin getting physical, when a distinguished, silver-haired man in his early fifties entered the room. On seeing him, I felt greatly relieved. He was Duncan Shellgrave, a vice president with the development bank. His nephew was a friend of mine, and I'd stayed at his house in Guat City on a couple of occasions.

"What the hell's going on here, Duncan?" I said, hoping aggressiveness would establish some tenuous spiritual credential.

"Just take it easy, Carl," he said, and told the major in Spanish that he'd take care of this.

The major, with a despondent sigh, said, "As you will," and Shellgrave led us into the adjoining office, a white room with a window of frosted glass and an air-conditioned chill.

"We're having a little problem," Shellgrave said, favoring us with his best loan-denied smile, indicating that we should take chairs. "I'm afraid you'll have to sit it out in here. Otherwise Major Pedroza will be quite annoyed."

There were two folding chairs; I left them to Sherril and DeVries, and perched on the edge of the desk. "What kind of problem?" I asked.

Another smile, hands spread in a show of helplessness.

I should tell you a story about Shellgrave to illustrate his character. A week after the Nicaraguan revolution, which I'd covered for a number of leftist rags, I was passing through Guat City when I ran into Shellgrave's nephew and he suggested we take dinner at his uncle's; he thought it would do his uncle a world of good to hear the straight shit concerning the state of affairs in Managua. Well, we got to the house, typical American paranoid chic with guard dogs, high walls topped with broken glass, and lots of electronic security, and when Shellgrave heard I'd just come from Managua, he said, "My God! You're lucky to be alive. They're slaughtering people in the streets down there."

I knew that this was absolutely not the case, but when I attempted to persuade Shellgrave of this, he put on that bland smile and said, "You must not have seen it. They were probably steering you away from the action."

I assured him that I'd been all over the streets; I'm no chump for the Sandinistas, but as revolutions go, Nicaragua had started out as a pretty clean one, and nothing like Shellgrave had suggested was going on. Still, I wasn't able to convince him. The fact that I'd just come from Managua seemed completely irrelevant to him; he gave his CIA informants ultimate credibility and me none. It didn't suit his basic thesis to believe anything I said, and so he didn't. He wasn't stonewalling me, he wasn't

Isaac Asimov Presents™ STAR TRADERS™ The Heroes of Tomorrow



The heroes of the far future are the daring captains who cross the galaxy with the rarest cargoes of a hundred worlds.

The *Star Traders* game brings you the excitement of travel and trade, as two to six players race for wealth. In the end, only one player will be named the Imperial Trader.

Skill and planning are needed to locate your stations. But the "Trader's Luck" cards make every trip a chancy one. You can lose a cargo — or gain prestige and Imperial favor!

The *Isaac Asimov Presents: Star Traders* game is available at your favorite toy, hobby or book store for \$19.95.

If your local store doesn't carry *Star Traders* you can order it by mail. Add \$1.55 for postage and handling. Texas residents please add \$1.44 sales tax. Please allow four weeks for delivery. Our catalog is free.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES
Box 18957-J Austin, TX 78760

Star Traders is a trademark of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. *Isaac Asimov Presents* is a trademark of Davis Publications, Inc., used under license. All rights reserved.

playing games. He simply didn't believe me. Men like Shellgrave, and you'll find them all over Latin America, they have a talent for belief; they *know* they're right about the important things, the big picture, and thus they understand that any information they receive to the contrary must be tainted. They thrive on the myth of *realpolitik*, they dance with who brung 'em, and their consciences are clear. They are very scary people. Perhaps not so scary as Major Pedroza and his ilk, but in my opinion it's a close call either way.

I knew there was no use in badgering him for details; I stared at the white walls, tried to cheer up Sherril with a wink and a smile.

DeVries started questioning Shellgrave, and I told him, "Don't waste your time."

He got angry at me for that; he pushed back that blond forelock that drove all the girls at the University of San Carlos to delirium, and said, "Hey, you may have burned out, man, but not me. This is more than a little hinkey here, y'know. This is some bad shit. Don't you smell it?"

"The man—" I pointed at Shellgrave "—is not responsible. For him, heaven's a room with a view of Wall Street. He doesn't know from hinkey. He's eaten so many people he thinks it's normal."

Shellgrave's smile never wavered; he may actually have been pleased by my characterization.

"See there," I said to DeVries. "He's fucking beatific. He knows the empire's crumbling, and that it's his sacred duty to hold onto the last crumb for as long as he can."

But DeVries, God bless him, was a believer; he kept after Shellgrave, though without intelligent result.

The shooting began about ten minutes after we'd entered the white room. Caps popping, that's what it sounded like above the shuddery hum of the air conditioner, and then the heavier beat of the M-60s. Sherril jumped to her feet, and Shellgrave, smiling, told her not to worry, everything was all right. He believed it. He wanted us to believe it. For our own good.

"So what's that?" I asked him. "The sound of Democracy in Action?"

He shook his head in bemusement: I was an incorrigible, and he just didn't know what to do with me.

The screaming began about three minutes after the shooting, and Shellgrave's reaction to this was not so calm. He stood, tried peering through the frosted glass, and that failing, started for the door, stopped, then went for it and locked it tight.

"Don't worry," I told him. "Everything's all right."

Sherril said, "What is it? What's happening?"

Her face was the color of cheesecloth, and her hands were twisting together; DeVries, too, looked shaky, and I wasn't feeling so hot myself.

"Yeah, what is happening?" DeVries asked Shellgrave.

Shellgrave was standing at the center of the room, his head tilted up and to the side, like a man who hears a distant call.

The screams were horrid, throat-tearing, screams of pure agony and fear; they were either drowning out most of the gunfire, or else there weren't as many people firing as there had been. Then somebody screamed right outside the window, and at that Shellgrave bolted for a filing cabinet, threw it open and began stacking papers on the desk. I picked one up, saw the word "mutagenic" before he snatched it from my hand.

I still believed we were going to survive, but my faith was dwindling, and maybe that was why I decided to live in ignorance no longer. I shoved Shellgrave hard, knocking him to the floor, and began leafing through the papers. He tried to come at me again, and I kicked him in the stomach.

DeVries and Sherril came to stand beside me. I couldn't make much sense out of the papers, but they appeared to outline a project that had been going on for twenty years, something to do with a new kind of food and its effects on a local settlement of Indians, who—being severely malnourished—had probably leaped at the chance to eat the shit.

"Jesus Christ!" said Sherril, staring at one of the documents.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Wait!" She began going through more of the papers.

Shellgrave groaned, said, "Those are classified," and this time it was DeVries who kicked him.

There was a sudden intensification of gunfire, as if the tide of battle had turned.

"God," said Sherril weakly, and dropped into Shellgrave's chair.

"Tell us, damn it!" DeVries said.

"I think," she said, and faltered; she drew a steadying breath. "I don't believe this." She looked at us hollow-eyed. "Mutants. The food's worked terrible changes on the second generation. The brain tissue's degenerated. The children of the ones who first ate the food, they're idiots. There's some stuff here I can't understand. But there've been changes in the skin and the blood, too. And I think . . . I think they've become nocturnal. Their eyes . . ." She swallowed hard. "They're killing them. They've stopped feeding them and they can't eat anything else but the plant they grow here."

I kneeled beside Shellgrave. "And now they're trying to kill your ass. That's them outside, right?"

He was having trouble breathing, but he managed a nod; he pointed to the papers. "Burn 'em," he wheezed.

"Uh-huh," I said. "Sure thing."

It suddenly struck me as being metaphorical, us being in that cool

white room, insulated from the screams and the gunfire and the monstrous dying that was happening out in the humid heat of the jungle. It was very American Contemplative, it was the classic American circumstance. All my years of filing horror stories, stories that had nothing of the bizarre technological horror of this one, yet were funded by equally demonic evil, stories that ended up in some city editor's wastebasket . . . I guess it was all this that allowed me then to editorialize my own existence. This was, you see, a particularly poignant moment for me. I realized the horror that was transpiring outside was in character with all the other horrors I'd witnessed. I'm sure that reading this as fiction, which is the only way I can present it, some will say that by injecting a science fictional element, I'm trivializing the true Central American condition. But that's not the case. What was going on was no different from a thousand other events that had happened over the previous hundred and fifty years or so. This was not the exception, this was the *rule*. And it displayed by its lack of contrast to other horrors the hideous nature of that rule. The excesses of United Fruit, the hellish sadism of men such as Torrijos, Somoza, D'aubisson, and thousands of their less reknowned minions, the slaughters, the invasions, the mass graves, the dumps piled high with smoldering corpses, cannibalism, rape, and torture on a national scale, all thoroughly documented and all thoroughly ignored, all orchestrated by a music of screams like that now playing . . . this was merely part of that, a minor adagio in a symphony of pain, the carrying-forward of a diseased tradition.

I understood that whoever won this battle would have little sympathy for journalists, and in this DeVries was way ahead of me. He'd dug out a pistol from the paperstorm of Shellgrave's desk, and after sticking it in his belt, he picked up a folding chair, told us to head for the trees, and then swung the chair at the window, clearing away shards of frosted glass. I clambered through, helped Sherril out, then DeVries—he had a folder of pertinent papers in one hand. After the coolness of the room, the fetid heat nearly caused me to gag. Glancing at the field beyond the office building, I spotted dozens, no, hundreds of dark and curiously twisted naked figures scampering through the agave; some were kneeling and tearing at the leaves, and there were bodies scattered everywhere, many showing bloody in the spotlights—the sort of flash Polaroid that takes about a second to develop fully in your mind and stays with you forever after, clear in all its medieval witchiness and savage detail. It was about fifty yards to the trees, and I thought we were going to make it without incident; all the screams and shooting were coming from the front of the office building. But then there was an agonized shout behind me, and I saw Shellgrave, who had struggled out the window, being

ISAAC ASIMOV

P R E S E N T S

ANTIBODIES

BY DAVID J. SKAL



"*Antibodies* is like a film by David Cronenberg from a screenplay by Harlan Ellison . . . easily the most controversial novel of the year." —Edward Bryant

CONGDON & WEED, INC.

New York • Chicago

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dragged down by a group of the twisted figures. Blood on his face. The next moment more of those figures were all around me.

Since the spotlights were aimed toward the field, it was fairly dark where we were, and I never did get a good look at our attackers. I had the impression of something resembling hard bumpy rind covering their faces, of slit eyes and mouths, and punctures for nostrils. Even for Indians, they were tiny, dwarfish, and they couldn't have been very strong, because I'm not very strong and I knocked them aside easily. There were, however, a lot of them, and if it hadn't been for DeVries I'm sure we would have died. He started firing with Shellgrave's pistol, and, as if death posed for them a great allure, they left off clutching at me and Sherril, and they went for DeVries. I grabbed Sherril's arm and bolted for the jungle. We were about sixty or seventy feet in under the canopy when I heard DeVries scream.

I'd been friends with DeVries for—as I've said—four years, but our friendship went by the boards, replaced by panic, and with Sherril in tow, I kept running, busting down rocky defiles, scrambling up rises, stumbling, falling, yelling in fright at every hint of movement. We must have been in flight for about five or six minutes when after a spectacular fall, rolling halfway down a hill through decayed vegetation and ferns, I discovered the mouth of a cave.

The limestone foundation of the Peten is riddled with caves, and so this was no miraculous occurrence; but being out of breath and bone-tired, at the time I viewed it as such. The opening, into which my legs had wound up dangling at the end of my fall, was narrow, choked with vines, no more than a couple of feet wide, but I could sense a large empty space beyond. I cleared away the vines, caught Sherril's hand and led her inside. Cool musty smell, water dripping somewhere near. I held up my cigarette lighter for a torch, illuminating a portion of a large domed gallery, the walls white and smooth, except for the occasional volute of limestone; against one wall was a tarpaulin with the edge of a crate showing beneath it. I clicked off the lighter, felt my way toward the tarp; when I reached it, using the lighter again, I examined the crates—there were four of them, all stamped with code designations and marked US AIR FORCE. There was the distinct odor of machine oil.

"What are they?" Sherril asked.

"Smells like weapons," I said. "Automatic rifles, I hope."

I began working at one of the crates, prying at the boards, but I wasn't making much headway. Then I heard a noise from outside the cave, something heavy moving in the brush. There was a large boulder beside the mouth, and in hopes that we could block the entrance with it, Sherril and I hurried back across the cave; but by the time we reached the entrance, the source of the noise was already halfway in, blocking out

the faint gleam of moonlight from above. We flattened against the wall next to the opening. A shadow stepped into the cave, too big to be one of the Indians; a beam of light sprang from its hand. I made out camouflage gear, a holstered pistol, and knowing that we had no choice but to attack, I jumped the man, driving him onto his back. Sherril was right behind me, clawing at his face. The man cursed in Spanish, tried to throw me off, and he might have if Sherril hadn't been bothering him. I managed to grab his hair; I smashed his head against the stone; after the third blow he went limp. I rolled away from him, catching my breath. Sherril picked up the flashlight and shined it on the man's slack pitted face. It was Major Pedroza. That made sense to me—the major was likely stockpiling weapons for his own little coup, or else was making a neat profit selling to the contras or some other group of courageous freedom fighters.

While I hadn't had time to absorb DeVries's death, the whole affair of the experimental farm, it seemed those things were moving me now, that and everything else I'd seen over the years, all the bad history I'd reported to no avail, and it also seems that Sherril was directed by similar motives, by anger born of disillusionment. Although she hadn't seen as much as I, although I hadn't given her the respect she deserved, I realized she had the instincts I'd once had for compassion, for truth, for hope—in a single night all those instincts had been fouled.

We went about tying up Pedroza with lengths of vine that I cut from around the cave mouth, using the knife I'd taken from him. I felt stony and emotionless, as if I were wrapping a package of meat. I turned him onto his belly and tied his arms behind him; then I tied his legs and connected them to a noose that fitted tightly around his neck. If he struggled he would only succeed in strangling himself. I was sure of one thing—no matter what happened to me and Sherril, Pedroza was going to die. This may strike some as unfair. What certain knowledge, they may ask, did I have about him? He certainly had done nothing to me. But as I have detailed earlier, he was no innocent. In truth, it should have been Shellgrave whom I was preparing to kill; he was the true villain of the piece, or at least the emblem of true villainy. Pedrozas would be impossible without Shellgraves. But the major would do, he would satisfy. I tore my shirt to make a gag and stuffed it into his mouth, lashing it in place with my belt. This accomplished, Sherril and I pushed the boulder to seal off the entrance; then we sat down to wait.

Neither of us said much. I was busy dealing with my desertion of DeVries; I knew I could have done nothing for him, but knowing that was little help. I saw him in my mind's eye firing Shellgrave's gun, a glimpse of blond hair, a pale strained face, then I saw him swarmed by the Indians, and then I heard him scream. I should have been used to

that sort of quick exit, I'd had it happen many times before, but this one wasn't going down easily. Maybe I'd been closer to DeVries than I had realized, or maybe it was the nightmare surrounding his death that made it seem insurmountable.

I'm not sure what was running through Sherril's mind, but I felt that the currents of our thoughts were somehow parallel. She began to shiver—it was dank in that cave—and I put an arm around her, let her lean against me. I asked her if she was okay, and she said, "Yeah," and snuggled up close. Her clean girl smell made me wistful and weak. Soon after that I kissed her. She pulled away at first, and said, "No, don't . . . not now."

"All right," I said evenly; in my mind I was ready to go along with her, but I kept my hand on her breast.

"What are you doing?" she said.

"I don't know, I just needed to touch you."

I took my hand away, but after a moment she put it back, held it against her breast. She made a despairing noise.

"I guess I need it, too," she said. "Isn't that something?"

"What do you mean?"

"To want this now. Isn't that—" she gave a dismayed laugh—"wrong or something." Another laugh. "Wrong." She said the word as if it had gained a whole new meaning, one she was only now capable of understanding.

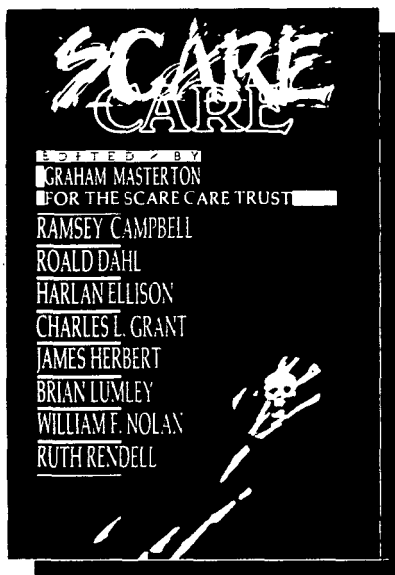
I had no answers for her. I kissed her again, and this time she kissed back; not long after that we spread our clothing on the stone for a mattress and made love. It was the only hope we had, the only thing we could do to save ourselves from the blind shadows and bloody shouts thronging our heads, and as a result our lovemaking was rough, more an act of anger than one of compassion. Involved in it, too, was the mutuality we'd had to begin with, the thing that might have grown to health, but now—I thought—fed by the food of that grotesque night, would bloom twisted, dark and futureless. And yet by engaging that mutuality, I had the sense that I was committing to it in a way from which it would be impossible to pull back.

It must have been while we were making love that the Indians found us, because when I surfaced from the heat and confusion that we had generated, I heard their voices: odd fluted whispers issuing not from the cave mouth but from somewhere overhead, leading me to realize there must be a second entrance. We struggled into our clothes, and I broke into the crates with Pedroza's knife; I had his pistol, but I doubted that would be sufficient firepower. The first crate contained anti-personnel rockets; I had no idea of how to use them. The second, however, contained M-16s and full clips. I inserted a clip into one and made ready to defend.

Horror's most visionary writers contribute their talents to help children everywhere.

SCARE CARE

**EDITED BY GRAHAM MASTERTON
FOR THE SCARE CARE TRUST**



If SCARE CARE had only been an anthology of remarkable horror stories by the finest writers in the field, it would have been a milestone. It includes over three dozen harrowing new tales by such writers as Ramsey Campbell, Harlan Ellison, Roald Dahl, James Herbert and Charles L. Grant.

But SCARE CARE is far more than that. It's a special benefit edition to aid the Scare Care Trust, an organization dedicated to raising money to help abused and needy children everywhere. All profits derived from the sale of this book will be donated to the trust.

"An excellent notion! I remember how it was to be a child, and I'm glad to see someone standing up for the children."

—Piers Anthony

\$19.95 ★ 0-312-93156-5 ★ 416 pages ★ JUNE

TOR hardcovers are distributed nationally by St. Martin's Press.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was surprised that they hadn't already attacked us, and when after several minutes they still hadn't made a move, I shined Pedroza's flashlight toward the ceiling.

In the instant before they ducked away from the second entrance, which was halfway up the side of the dome, I saw the glowing yellow cores of their eyes; the sight was so alarming, I nearly dropped the flashlight. I handed it to Sherril and fired a short burst at the opening; it wasn't very big, a mere crack, but it might, I thought, be large enough to admit those twisted bodies. The drop was about forty feet.

"The papers," I asked Sherril, "did they say anything about whether they'd be able to take a long fall?"

She thought it over. "There was some stuff about low calcium content. Their bones are probably pretty brittle."

"They might think of lowering vines."

"Maybe, but according to the papers they're . . . they're animals. Their IQs aren't measurable."

I heard a strangled noise and had Sherril shine the flashlight toward Pedroza; his eyes were bugged, his face suffused with blood.

"Be careful," I advised him in Spanish. "You'll hurt yourself."

His eyes looked more baleful than those of the Indians.

"I think we'll be all right," Sherril said. "If we can hold them off 'til morning, we'll be all right."

"Because they're nocturnals?"

"Uh-huh. They can't take much light. They might be able to wait until mid-morning, what with the canopy, but by noon they'd be in terrible pain." The flashlight wavered in her hand. "They burrow."

"What?" I said.

"They move around at night and when daylight comes, wherever they are, they dig burrows in the dirt, they cover themselves with dirt and sleep . . . like vampires. They scarcely breathe at all when they're asleep."

"Christ," I said, unable to absorb this, to feel any more revulsion than was already within me.

I glanced at Pedroza; he had a lot to answer for.

Sherril was looking at him, too, and from the loathing that registered in her expression, I knew that Pedroza would be in for a bad time even if I weren't there.

We sat down by the boulder, keeping our weight against it in case the Indians tried to move it; we kept the light shining on the entrance overhead, and we talked to drown out the incessant and unsettling fluting of their voices, not speech in all likelihood, mere noises, the music of a pitiless folly reverberating through the cave. I told Sherril stories, but they weren't the stories I would have told her under other circumstances.

They were stories about the brave good things I'd seen, stories that still hoped, stories that gave storytelling a good name, and not my usual rotten-with-disgust tales of Businessmen From Hell and their global sleights-of-hand. Those stories were the best parts of my life passing before my eyes, and it wasn't that I was afraid of dying, because I thought we were going to make it; it was that the last of my foolish ideals were giving up the ghost, having their final say before wisping up into ectoplasmic nada. Although I'd convinced myself that I'd given up on my ideals a long time before, I believe it was then that I utterly surrendered to the evil of the world.

It was the same for Sherril. She talked about nursing, about the good feeling it gave her, she talked about her home, her old friends, but she kept lapsing. I kept having to tune her in with questions as if her station were fading from the dial. I watched her face. She was more than pretty, so damn pretty I couldn't believe that I'd had the fortune to make love to her—a stupid thing to consider, but stupid thoughts like that were occurring constantly. Her eyes were green with hazel flecks in the irises, her hair was silky, but her most attractive feature was that she knew what I knew. She was changing before my eyes, toughening, learning things that she shouldn't have had to learn all at once; she was a nice girl, and it was a shame for her to have to understand so young what a shuck niceness was. All the while as I listened, I could hear the sick music of the doomed tribe wanting to kill us, Pedroza grunting as he tried to enlist our attention. None of that mattered. In a way I was almost happy to be up against it, to know how bad it could get, and yet there I was, still able to look at a pretty woman and hope for something. I was aware that even this could be taken from me, but I was beyond being afraid. And I was learning, too. Although I didn't recognize it at the time, I was learning that you can fall in love through hate, by being with someone in a crucible of a moment when everything else is dying and the only thing left is to try to live. Or maybe it wasn't love, maybe it was just the thing that takes the place of love for those who have surrendered.

Just before dawn, some of the Indians began dropping through the crack. About twenty of them in all made the jump, but no more than a third of that number survived the landing, and they were incapable of swift movement, their bones shattered. The first one down startled me and drew a shriek from Sherril; but after that it wasn't even dramatic, merely pitiful. The wounded ones crawled toward us, their razor-slit mouths agape to reveal blood-red tongues within, their strangely unfinished faces displaying what struck me as a parody of desperation. I finished them off with bursts from the M-16. I didn't know what had caused them to try, nor did I know why they had stopped, why they didn't

just keep coming like lemmings; perhaps both the jumping and the stopping had been stages along the path to their own surrender. When I was sure that no more would be coming, I dragged their bodies deeper into the cave, out of sight around a bend; I tried to avoid looking at them, but I couldn't help noticing a few details. Shriveled genitalia; a faint bluish cast to the skin as if they suffered from cyanosis; the S-curved spines, the knotted shoulderblades. They were light, those bodies, like the bodies of hollow children.

The sun rose about a quarter of six that morning, making a dim red glow in the crack overhead, a slit evil eye, but the voices kept fluting for a while after that. Pedroza's eyes pled with us; he had wet his pants, the poor soul. We watched him wriggle and grunt; we made it a game to see which of us could get him to produce the most interesting noise by doing things such as picking up the knife and walking behind him.

Eventually we let him alone and sat talking, planning what we'd do once we left the cave: avoid Sayaxché, strike out for Flores, maybe hitch a ride with an oil truck returning from the jungle.

Sherril looked at me and said, "What are you going to do afterward?"

"I'm not staying around here. The States . . . maybe I'll go back to the States. How 'bout you? Nicaragua?"

She shook her head. "I can't think of anywhere that sounds right. Maybe home."

"Calgary."

"Uh-huh."

"What's Calgary like?"

She opened her mouth, closed it, then laughed. "I don't know." Then after a pause. "The Rockies, they're close by."

I thought about the Rockies, about their clean, cold rectitude, their piney stillness, so different from the malarial tumult I had traveled in for all those years. I said their name out loud; Sherril glanced at me inquiringly.

"Just seeing if it sounded right," I said.

It was almost noon before we decided it was absolutely safe to leave the cave. I went over to Pedroza and unplugged his mouth. He had to lick his lips and work his jaw for a few moments in order to speak; then he said, "Please . . . I . . . please."

"Please what?" I asked him.

His eyes darted to Sherril, back to me.

"Don't shoot me," he said. "I have money, I can help you."

"I'm not going to shoot you," I said. "I'm going to leave you tied up here."

That was a test to see his reaction, to determine whether he had any allies left alive; if he flunked I intended to shoot him. His fear was no

act, he was terrified. He babbled, promising everything, he swore to help us. I hated him so much, I cannot tell you how much I hated him. He was all the objects of my hate.

"I could shoot you," I said. "But I think I'll just leave you here. Of course you've got an option. I bet if you jerk real hard with your legs, you can probably kill yourself."

"Listen," he began.

I clubbed him in the jaw with the rifle butt; the blow twisted his head, and he had to fight to keep from overreacting and strangling himself. I kept talking to him, I told him if he confessed his sins I might give him a chance to live. I was very convincing in this. He was reluctant at first, but then his sins came pouring out: rape, massacre, torture, everything I'd expected. He seemed emptied afterward, drained of strength, as if the secret knowledge of his crimes had been all that sustained him.

"Say a hundred Hail Marys," I told him, and made the sign of the cross in the air. "Jesus forgives you."

He started to say something, but I stuffed the gag back in.

Sherril was staring at him, her face cold, unrelenting.

I kissed her, intending to cheer her, boost her spirits, but when I looked at Pedroza, I had the idea that the kiss had wounded him. I kissed her again, touched her breasts. He squeezed his eyes shut, then opened them very wide; he wriggled a bit. Sherril knew what I was up to, and she was all for it; her antipathy for the major was as strong as mine. We spread our clothes on the stones and we made love a second time, showing Pedroza the sweetness that life can be, letting him understand the entire pain of his fate—once again it seemed the only thing we could do. He was nothing to us, he was simply everything, an abstract, a target as worthlessly neutral as a president.

By chance, we were making love beneath the crack in the limestone, and a slant of dusty sun like those you might see falling through a high cathedral window fell across Sherril, painting a strange golden mask over her eyes and nose, the sort of half-mask worn by women at carnivals and fancy balls, creating of her face a luminous mystery. And what we were doing did seem mysterious, directed, inspired. It was no performance, it was ritual, it was a kind of hateful worship. We were very quiet, even at the end we stifled our cries, and the silence intensified our pleasure. Afterward, though I could hear the glutinous noise of Pedroza's breath, it was as if we were alone with our god in that holy dome of stillness, the white cold walls like the inside of a skull, and we were its perfect thoughts. I felt incredibly tender. I caressed and kissed her, I accepted her caresses and kisses, bathed in that streak of gold, illuminated, blessed in our purpose. I suppose we were mad at that moment, but we were mad like saints.

We dressed, smiling at each other, unmindful of Pedroza, and it wasn't until we began shifting the stone back in front of the cave mouth that we looked at him. He was still pleading with his eyes, wriggling toward us and whining, making choked, gargling noises. I felt no sympathy for him. He deserved whatever was in store for him. He was trying to nod, aiming his eyes at the gun, begging me to shoot him.

"Adios," I said—a word that means "to God," an ironic conceit of the language in these godless times.

We shifted the stone into place.

Before we set out for Flores we were brought up short by what we saw just beyond the mouth of the cave. The side of the adjoining hill was dotted with mounds of black dirt, each one about five feet long. There were hundreds of them, tucked in among ferns, under rotten logs, beneath bushes. Like infestations of ants I'd seen in South America. It was horrible to see, and thinking about those tiny deformed bodies lying moribund beneath the dirt, I became sick and dizzy. The ultimate attitude of surrender. I suppose I could have been merciful and shot them as they lay; the crates in the cave contained a sufficiency of death. But someone might have heard, and, too, I had gone beyond the concepts of mercy and humanitarian aid. I wasn't in the game anymore. I felt bad about that, but at least I'd tried, I had spent years trying, whereas most people surrender without even making an effort. There was nothing I could do except to leave. So we walked away from the cave, from Sayaxché, from Guatemala, from those pathetic little things with slit eyes and malfunctioning brains in their sleep of dirt and nightmares, from Major Pedroza in the final white church of his terror, from the whole damn world. And because we had nowhere we wanted to go any longer, we went there together.

Sometimes I look at Sherril, and she looks at me, and we both wonder why we stay together. We're still in love, but it doesn't seem reasonable that love should survive an act of surrender as complete as the one we made, and we keep expecting some vile mutation to occur, the product of that night in the jungle beyond Sayaxche. I suppose that's why we don't have any children. We don't think about all this very much, however. Life is sweet. We've got money, food, a future, a cabin in the Rockies not far from Calgary, work we care about—though perhaps not with the same passion we once evinced. It's good to make love, to walk, to smell the wind and watch the sun on the evergreens. We're not really happy, too much has happened for us to buy that chump; but we neither one of us ever required happiness. It's too great a chore to be happy when the world is going down the tubes, when the shitstorm is about ready to come sweeping in from the backside of creation and surprise us with a truly

disastrous plague or cosmic rays from hell, and there are signs in the sky that it's time to get right with God or maybe make a few moves to change things, and all you hear is the same placid generic bullshit about shoring up the economy and possibly kicking a few bucks over to the extremists who would kind of like to have breathable air and keep the ice caps from melting and would prefer not to alienate the rest of humanity by supporting every sadistic tumor in a uniform who decides he's going to be God of Mangoland and run the cocaine franchise for the South Bronx in return for saying No to the Red Menace. Central America isn't just Central America. It's what's happening, it's coming soon to your local theater, and if you think I'm overstating the case, if you don't see the signs, if you haven't been taking notes on the inexorable transformation of the Land of the Free into just another human slum . . . well that's cool. Just kick back, and pop yourself a cold one, maybe catch that ABC special on the Starving Man and get a little misty-eyed, it'll make you feel cozier when it's time for "Monday Night Football" or "Miami Vice," like you've paid your dues by almost feeling something.

And don't worry, everything's all right.

I promise I won't mention any of this again.

Adios. ●

NEAT STUFF

(Continued from page 14)

thought of in its day, disappeared. But then, when United Artists acquired rights to all pre-1948 Warner Brothers films, a slightly water-damaged print was discovered in their vault.

Now I've often read critics recommend "lost classics" that turn out to be unwatchable duds. This is definitely not one of them. The story—the master wax sculptor trapped in a fire set by his partner—is the same as the 1953 version. But director Michael Curtiz fashioned a grimly humorous exploitation shocker. Fay Wray appears as the damsel in distress, but Glenda Farrell steals the film as the noisy, wise-cracking reporter

who fires off bon mots quicker than she can pop her gum.

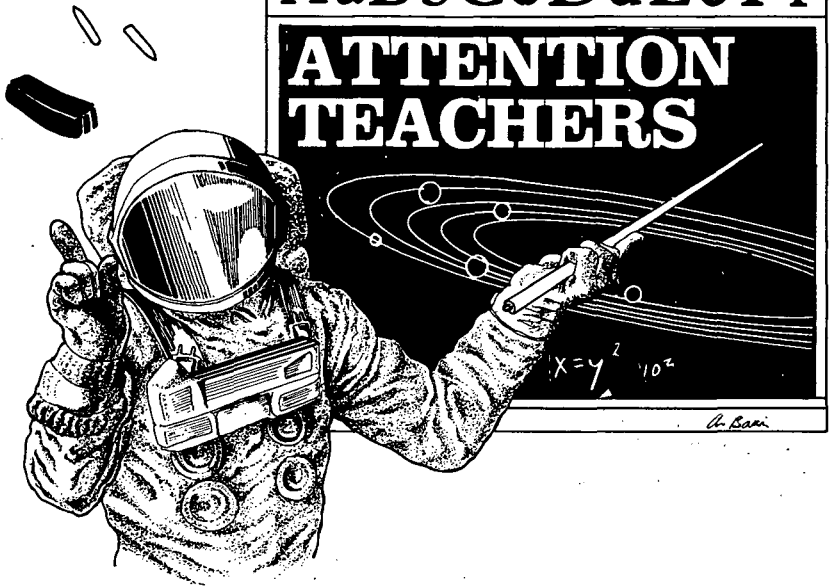
The film barrels along at a breathtaking pace. The pastel colors of the two-strip Technicolor process and the expressionistic sets of Anton Grot create a pervasively ominous feel. Lionel Atwill is the sculptor who, when not confined to his wheelchair, lopes around New York stealing bodies for his creations. Should you get a chance to rent or buy this video, take a close look at the scarred, burned face under Atwill's waxy visage. It's a marvelous make-up job. And ask yourself what contemporary horror hero he looks like.

Curtiz made over one hundred films at Warner Brothers, and though *The Mystery of the Wax*

(Continued on page 115)

AaBbCcDdEeFf

ATTENTION TEACHERS



Is Science Fiction part of your school's curriculum?

Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* are pleased to introduce new programs for teachers to introduce their students to the wonders of science fiction.

Both *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* and *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* are used by school and college instructors across the country in a variety of English, social science and science courses.

As a reader of science fiction, you know that these magazines will stimulate and challenge your students. The award-winning stories, novellas, essays and science fact articles featured in both magazines will foster your students' understanding of science and technology, and will nurture their appreciation for the ways that evolving technology affects human behavior and values. The shorter features will make both magazines easy for you to incorporate into your lesson plan.

If you would like more information about *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact's* and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine's* new school program, let us know by completing the questionnaire on the facing page.

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please send me more information about Davis Publications' science fiction classroom program.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name of School/College _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Academic Subject Taught _____ Grade level _____

Is Science Fiction part of this institution's curriculum?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, in what academic department? _____

What types of materials are currently used to teach science fiction?

Science Fiction Novels _____

Magazines _____

Textbooks _____

If you were to use *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* and/or *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* in your classroom, would you want special teaching materials to be made available?

Yes _____ No _____

Please tell us if you have a colleague who might be interested in receiving information about Davis Publications' science fiction classroom program.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please Send To:

Davis Publications, Inc.

380 Lexington Avenue

New York, New York 10017

Att'n: Laura Guth

Or call (212) 557-9100 and ask for the Education Department. Thank you very much.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ASF1

TO YOUR HEALTH

by Isaac Asimov

George and Azazel return to our pages
with a toast "To Your Health."

art: Hank Jankus



JOINED TO THE DRC
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



I sneezed.

George drew himself away and said, austere, "Another cold?"

I blew my nose without doing myself much good and said (my voice rather muffled by the tissue), "Not a cold. Sinusitis."

I stared at the remains of my coffee as though it were its fault that it had had no taste. I said, "This is the fourth flare-up of my sinusitis in the course of a year and each time I lose my sense of smell and taste for a shorter or longer length of time. Right now I can't taste a thing and the dinner we've just eaten might as well have been composed of cardboard."

"Will it help," said George, "if I assure you that everything was superb?"

"Not in the least," I said, grumpily.

"I myself don't have these afflictions," he said. "I attribute it entirely to clean living and a clear conscience."

"Thank you," I said, "for your sympathy, and I prefer to think that you avoid these disasters simply because no self-respecting microorganism would consent to live on your foul tissues."

"I don't take offense at that unkind remark, old fellow," said George, bristling more than a bit, "because I understand that these afflictions sour the disposition and cause you to say things that, in your right mind (assuming you have ever been in it), you would not say. It reminds me very much of my good friend Manfred Dunkel, when he was competing with his good friend, Absalom Gelb, for the charms of the fair Euterpe Weiss."

I said, morosely, "Curse and blast your good friend, Manfred Dunkel, his good friend Absalom Gelb, and their mutual prey, Euterpe Weiss."

"That is your sinusitis speaking, old man," said George, "not you."

Manfred Dunkel and Absalom Gelb [said George] had both attended the New York Institute of Opticianry and a fast friendship had formed between the two young men. It is, of course, impossible for two young men to immerse themselves in the mystery of lenses and refraction, to tackle the serious conditions of myopia, presbyopia, and hypermetropia, to sit at the grinding table together, without coming to feel like brothers.

They studied eye charts together, designed new ones for those who were most familiar with the Cyrillic or Greek alphabets, chose ideograms for Orientals, and discussed as only two specialists could the intricacies of balancing the advantages versus the disadvantages of using the various accents, grave, acute, circumflex, and cedillas, for French patients; umlauts for German ones; tildes for Hispanics, and so on. As Absalom told me once, very emotionally, the absence of these accents was pure

racism and resulted in imperfect corrections of the eyes of those who were not of pure Anglo-Saxon ancestry.

In fact, a Homeric struggle on the subject filled the letter columns of the *American Journal of Optical Casuistry* some years back. Perhaps you remember an article written jointly by our two friends denouncing the old charts. It was entitled "Eye! Tear that tattered ensign down." Manfred and Absalom stood back to back against the united conservatism of the profession and although they did not succeed in imprinting their point of view upon the field, it drew them closer together than ever.

Upon graduating they opened the firm of Dunkel and Gelb, having tossed a coin to see which name was to go first. They prospered exceedingly. Dunkel, perhaps, was a trifle better at grinding surfaces to perfection, while Gelb was an acknowledged master at designing spectacles in art deco modes. In everything, they saw, as they were fond of saying, eye to eye.

It was not surprising, then, that when they fell in love, it was with the same woman. Euterpe Weiss came in for new contact lenses and as the two men eyed her (one cannot say ogled in connection with the truly professional manner in which they studied her lovely optics), they realized they had encountered perfection.

I cannot say, as a nonoptician, that I quite appreciated what that perfection consisted of, but each of the two waxed lyrical to me—separately, of course—and talked fluently of optical axes and diopters.

Because I had known the two lads since they were young teenagers wearing their first spectacles (Manfred was slightly nearsighted while Absalom was slightly farsighted, and both were moderately astigmatic), I feared the result.

Alas, I thought to myself, surely a sacred boyhood friendship would founder, as the two, grown into strong men, would compete for Euterpe who, as Manfred said, with his hands clasped over his heart, was "a sight for sore eyes," or, as Absalom said, with his hands raised to heaven, "where Euterpe is concerned, the eyes have it."

But I was wrong. Even in connection with the divine Euterpe, the two opticians, closer to each other than even the closest-set eyes, behaved in perfect amity.

It was understood between them that on Tuesdays and Fridays, Manfred would be free to date Euterpe, if such dates could be arranged, while on Mondays and Thursdays, Absalom would have his chance. Weekends, the two worked together, taking the damsel to museums, operas, poetry readings, and chaste meals at some convenient diner. Life was a giddy round of pleasure.

What about Wednesday, you ask? That showed the young men's en-

lightened attitude at their highest and most refined. On Wednesdays, Euterpe was free to date others if she cared to.

The passion of Manfred was pure, as was that of Absalom. They wanted Euterpe to make her own choice even if it meant that some lout who was not an optician might be gazing into her eyes—breathing sighs—telling lies—

What do you mean, you wonder who's kissing her now? Why do you introduce non sequiturs when I am trying to give you a coherent account of events?

All went well for quite a while. No week passed in which Manfred didn't play a snappy game of casino with the young lady on one evening, while on another Absalom would blow a stirring tune on a comb covered with tissue paper. It was a halcyon time.

Or, at least, I thought it was.

And then Manfred came to see me. One look at his haggard face, and it seemed to me I knew all. "My poor young man," I said, "don't tell me that Euterpe has decided that, on the whole, she prefers Absalom?" (I was neutral in this matter, old fellow, and was prepared to mourn if either young man got it in the eye, so to speak.)

"No," said Manfred, "I won't tell you that. Not yet. But it can't last long, Uncle George. I am under a handicap. My eyes are red and swollen and Euterpe can scarcely respect an optician with eyes that fall short of normality."

"You have been weeping, have you?"

"Not at all," said Manfred, proudly. "Opticians are strong men who do not weep. I merely have a case of the sniffles. A cold, you understand."

"Do you have them often?" I asked, with sympathy.

"Lately, yes."

"And Absalom, does he have colds?"

"Yes," said Manfred, "but not as often as I do. He throws his back out occasionally, and I never do, but what of that? A man with a bad back has eyes that are clear and pellucid. The occasional groan, the periodic inability to stand up, are unimportant. But as Euterpe stares at my streaming eyes, at the redness of the sclerotic blood vessels, at the flush of the conjunctiva, surely a feeling of repulsion must sweep over her."

"Ah, but does it, Manfred? By all accounts she is a sweet damsel with a melting, sympathetic eye."

Manfred said grimly, "I dare not chance it. I absent myself when I have a cold and lately, this has meant that Absalom has seen her far more often than I have. He is a tall and lissome young man and no maiden can listen to the stirring music of his comb and tissue paper without being moved. I'm afraid I don't have a chance." And he buried

his head in his hands, being careful to avoid harmful pressure on his eyes.

I was moved myself, as though ten combs with ten tissue papers had struck up "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

I said, "I might be able to arrange to make you immune to colds forever, my boy."

He looked up in wild hope. "You have a cure? A method of prevention? But no—" The momentary flame in his reddened eyes died away, leaving them just as reddened, however. "Medical science is helpless before the common cold."

"Not necessarily. I might not only cure you, my boy, but I might see to it that Absalom was afflicted with constant colds."

I said that only to test him, for you know my rigid sense of ethics, old fellow, and I am proud to say that Manfred passed as only an optician could.

"Never," he said, ringingly. "I ask that I be freed of this incubus, yes, but only that I might fight fair and meet my adversary on equal grounds. I would scorn to place him under a disadvantage of his own. I would sooner lose the celestial Euterpe than do that."

"It shall be as you say," I said, wringing his hand and clapping him on his back.

Azazel—I may have told you of my two-centimeter extraterrestrial, the one whom I can call from the vasty deep of space and who will come when I do call for him. Oh, I have, have I? —And what do you mean I should tell truth and shame the devil. I *am* telling the truth, blast you.

In any case, Azazel tramped up and down the edge of the table, his wiry tail twitching and his little nubbins of horns flushing a faint blue with the effort of thought.

"You are asking for health," said Azazel. "You are asking for normality. You are asking for a situation of balance."

"I know what I'm asking for, O Divine and Universal Omnipotence," I said, trying to mask my impatience. "I am asking to have my friend avoid having colds. I've had you meet him. You studied him."

"And that's all you want? To avoid his having these nasty, rheumy, messy, phlegmy colds that you sub-bestial inhabitants of a worm-eaten planet are subject to? You think that it is possible to light one corner of a room without lighting the whole room? I'll have you know that the balance of the four humors in the specimen you showed me is badly, viciously askew."

"The balance of the four *humors*? Sanctified one, humors went out with Herodotus."

Azazel gave me a sharp look. "What do you think humors are?"

WEAR THE FUTURE

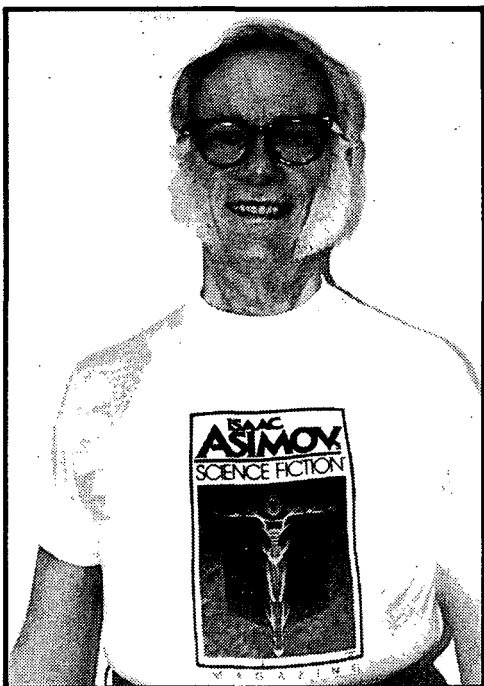
*Isaac Asimov's T-Shirts are
light years beyond the ordinary!*

THE IAsfm T-Shirt features the color artwork of illustrator Joe Burleson. The extraterrestrial image is printed on heavyweight, high-quality fabric. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.

**ONLY
\$7.95**

Plus \$2.00 postage and handling.
Please specify size and quantity.
Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery.

IAsfm T-shirt
Davis Publications, Inc.
380 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017



Please send me _____ IAsfm t-shirts
Please specify size ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL

Name _____
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please enclose personal check or money
order. No COD's please. New York residents
please add sales tax.

Send to: IAsfm T-shirt
Davis Publications, Inc.
380 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The four fluids thought to control the body: blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile."

Azazel said, "What a disgusting idea. I hope that this Herodotus is very properly held in universal execration by your people. The four humors are, of course, four mind sets, which, when balanced very carefully, cannot help but bring permanent normality and good health to the useless bodies of even such insignificant vermin as yourselves."

"Well, then, can you balance the humors very carefully in my verminous friend?"

"I think I can, but it's not easy. I don't want to touch him."

"You won't. He's not even here."

"I mean make contact astrally. It would require a ritual of purification that would take the better part of a week and be quite painful in spots."

"I am sure, O, Essence of Perfection, that avoiding the astral touch would be to you a trifling matter."

As usual, Azazel brightened under flattery and his horns stiffened. "I dare say I can," he said, and he could.

The next day I saw Manfred. He was visibly glowing with health and he said to me, "Uncle George, those deep-breathing exercises you told me about did the trick. The cold was cured between one breath and the next. My eyes cleared up, whitened, cooled, and I can now look the whole world in the face. In fact," he continued, "I don't know what it is, but I feel healthy all over. I feel like a well-oiled machine. My eyes are the headlights of a marvelous locomotive that is racing across the countryside."

"I even," he went on, "have this marvelous impulse to dance to some seductive Spanish rhythm. I will do this and dazzle the heavenly and ethereal Eurterpe."

He left the room, dancing, his feet spurning the floor with delicate steps while he cried out: "Eye, eye, eye-eye."

I could not help but smile. Manfred was not quite as tall as Absalom, not quite as lissome, and although all opticians are classically handsome, Manfred was not quite as classical in his handsomeness. He looked better than the Apollo Belvedere but not quite as much better as Absalom did.

This glow of good health, I thought, would redress the odds.

As it happened, I was forced at this point to leave town for some time, owing to an argument I had with a bookie who happened to be a rather low devil, impervious to logic.

When I returned, I found that Manfred had been waiting for me.

"Where have you been?" he asked peevishly.

I stared at him with concern. He looked healthy and fit, his eyes liquid and limpid, and yet—and yet—

"I have been away avoiding business," I said, carefully not going into details, "but what is wrong with you, my boy?"

"Wrong?" He laughed, hackingly. "What should be wrong? The beautiful Euterpe has made her choice and it is not me. She is going to marry Absalom."

"But what happened? Surely, you didn't get—"

"I didn't get sick? Of course not. I've been trying to get sick, you understand. I have walked out in chilly rains. I have put on wet socks. I have fraternized with people who had colds and who were suffering from rhinitis. For heaven's sake, I even courted conjunctivitis. —Anything to be sick."

"But I don't understand, Manfred. Why should you want to be sick?"

"Because Euterpe has a strong motherly streak. Apparently, this is common among human beings of the feminine variety. I hadn't known this."

I looked grave. I *had* heard this. After all, women had children and I knew for a fact that children were always ailing, drooling, dripping, sneezing, coughing, growing feverish, turning blue, and in other ways becoming repulsively ill. And it never seemed to affect a mother's love; rather the reverse, it would seem.

"I should have thought of that," I said, thoughtfully.

Manfred said, "It's not your fault, Uncle George. I stopped the deep-breathing exercises at once and that didn't help. It was Absalom, the poor fellow. His back went out altogether. He was simply pinned to the bed."

"He couldn't be faking, I suppose."

Manfred looked horrified. "Faking? An optician? Uncle George! Professional standards would not permit such a thing. Nor would our close friendship. Besides, one time, when I jumped on him unexpectedly and forced him to sit up, his howl of agony could not have been simulated."

"And this has affected Euterpe?"

"Unbelievably. She sits at his side incessantly, feeds him bowl after bowl of chicken soup, and sees to it that the warm compress over his eyes is changed frequently."

"A warm compress over his eyes? What good does that do? I understood you to say it was his back that was out."

"It is, Uncle George, but Euterpe understands, for we have taught her, that all treatment begins with the eyes. In any case, she says that it is her mission in life to care for Absalom, to see that he recovers, to make him happy and comfortable, and with that end in view, she will marry him."

"But, Manfred, you were a martyr to colds. Why didn't she—"

"Because I avoided her, then, unwilling to subject her to contagion,

unwilling to become aware of the cold look of repulsion I fancied would be in her eyes. How wrong I was! How wrong!" And he beat his fist against his head.

"You could pretend—" I began.

But again there was that haughty look on his face. "An optician does not live a lie, Uncle George. Besides, for some reason, no matter how I pretend to be ill, I find that I don't carry conviction. I simply look too healthy. —No, I must face my fate, Uncle George. Absalom, bless him for a true friend, has asked me to be best man."

And so it was. Manfred was best man, and through all the long years since, he has remained single. There are times when I think that perhaps he might be reconciled to his sad fate. After all, Absalom now has three rather unpleasant children; Euterpe has gained weight and her voice has grown shrill and she is rather extravagant.

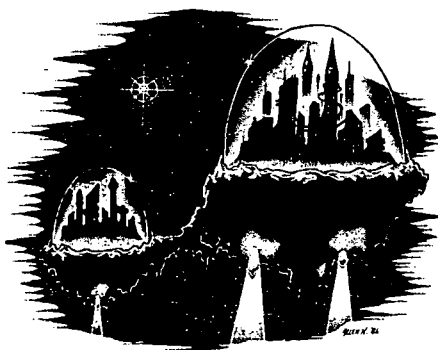
I pointed this out to Manfred recently, and he simply sighed and said, "You may be perfectly correct, Uncle George, but when an optician loves, he loves not lightly—but forever."

George, having sighed sentimentally, stopped talking, and I said, "Strange, but the only optician I know in some detail has never been seen without a woman; nor has he ever been seen with the same woman twice."

"A detail," said George, waving his hand. "I told you this story to convince you that I can cure your sinusitis. For a paltry twenty dollars—"

"No," I said, sharply. "My wife, whom I love very dearly, is a physician, and gets a perverted pleasure out of doctoring me. Make me symptom-free and she would probably go mad. Here, I'll give you fifty dollars. Just promise to leave me alone."

It was money well spent. ●



GIVE YOUR KIDS A HOPEFUL FUTURE

Raising a family in a crater settlement near the hummocky flanks of Elysium Mons on Mars is not the easiest undertaking ever attempted, but it certainly provides new ground for us to demonstrate the best attributes of the human spirit.

Discovery

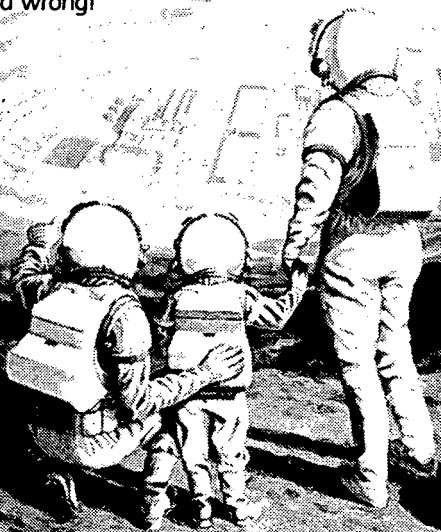
Exploration

Pioneering

Community

To name just a few . . .

This is the future that the National Space Society is fighting for. If you think it is going to happen without your active support, you are wrong! And without space for everyone to live, work, and play, the limited future your children will face is also wrong. Dead wrong!



Sunday Drive by J. Wallace Jones

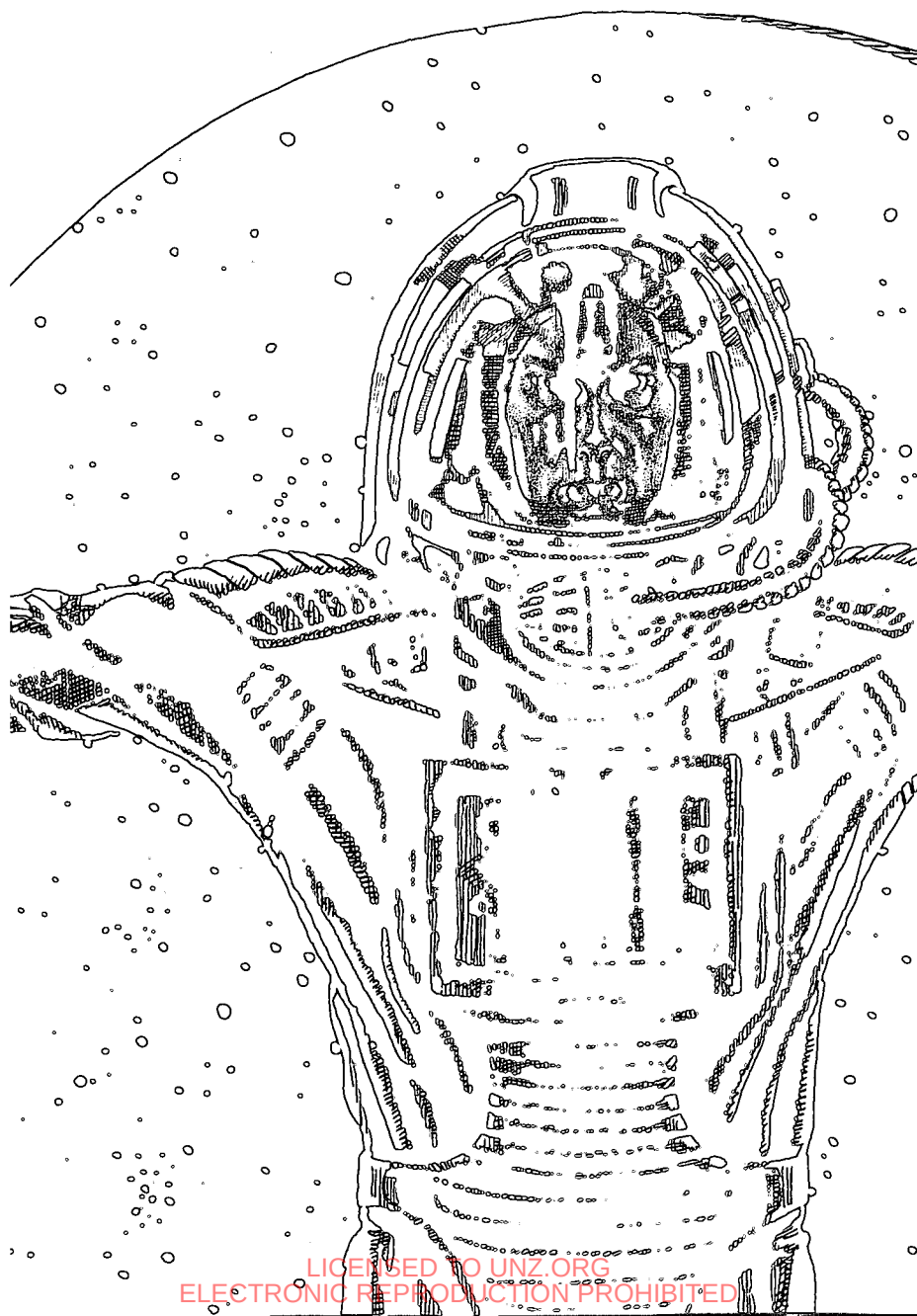
- ☐ I am enclosing \$30 regular annual dues
☐ I am enclosing \$18 youth/sr citizen (under 22/over 64) (my age is _____)



NATIONAL SPACE SOCIETY

Dept. DV1 • 922 Pennsylvania Ave SE • Washington DC 20003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NIGHTMARES OF THE CLASSICAL MIND

by Charles Sheffield

Charles Sheffield's last story in this magazine was "Destroyer of Worlds" (February 1989). He wishes to point out that he is not like the narrator in the following tale (at least, not all that much).

© JANET AULISIO 1989

art: Janet Aulisio

"... the quantum mechanics paradoxes, which can truly be said to be the nightmares of the classical mind."

—Ilya Prigogine, Nobel Prizewinner, 1977.

We had come to re-animate a corpse.

GOG filled the sky ahead of us, eight kilometers long, a dark, silent figure nailed to a giant cross of metal girders.

We were silent, too. Vilfredo Germani was taking us to a rendezvous at the center of the crucifix, but until we arrived at the Glory Of God there was nothing to do but gather around the forward screen and stare at the looming figure.

"Not a glimmer there," said Celia Germani at last. "Nothing."

"What did you expect? A pilot light?" Her father did not turn to look at her. We were less than ten kilometers from GOG.

She gave me a nudge in the ribs with her elbow, and a second later her hand crept like a little mouse into mine. She scratched her nails gently against my palm.

"That's not so daft as you might think," said Malcolm McCollum. He was the fourth member of the experimental crew, and our expert on anything to do with power systems. "If GOG was set up to run off solar power, there might still be systems ticking over. In fact, I'm hoping there will be. It'll make start-up a lot easier."

Vilfredo Germani said nothing more, but he shook his head. He must have checked the status of the Glory Of God before he made his proposal, and if he thought there was no power on GOG he was probably right. But after Thomas Madison's death, the return to Earth had been so random and disorganized that anything was possible. No one had a clear idea which sections were still airtight, which power systems had been left on to drain the reserves, or even if everyone on GOG had got away safely. Was there still the possibility of a desiccated corpse or two in one of the station's convoluted corridors?

I said nothing at all about that thought. As a late addition and supernumerary to the party, I was supposed to work hard and keep my mouth shut. The original exploration group was to have been just the Germanis, father and daughter, plus McCollum and the shuttle pilots. It was only Celia's wheedling that had persuaded her father to add me to the group at the last moment.

We drew steadily closer to the main dock. The detailed plans of the Glory Of God had been a big secret, but we knew the general layout. The long arm of the cross was eight kilometers long, and the short arm five kilometers. However, the living quarters were all contained in a sphere about three hundred meters in diameter on the far side of the

cross, and the Christ-figure itself was no more than a thin translucent skin stretched over a metal frame of girders. The purpose of the Glory Of God had been effect. Thomas Madison had planned the whole system with that in mind. GOG moved in sun-synchronous polar orbit, roughly eight hundred kilometers high, which meant that the cross was visible at nine-thirty every evening (prime time, if you want to be cynical) from almost everywhere on Earth. Seen from the surface, GOG was a shining emblem in the sky, bigger than the full Moon. As its designer had intended, the sight was breathtaking.

But Vilfredo Germani was a theoretical physicist, not a religious leader. He was interested in other uses of GOG, and visual effects were of no interest to him. As the Shuttle performed its final closing he became more intense and preoccupied. The funding foundations and government grant committees knew Germani as a gregarious, affable man, the most lucid and persuasive salesman for his ideas that could be imagined. They would not have recognized the twitchy, dark-faced fanatic who peered anxiously at the forward screen.

To be honest, I was no less nervous. GOG had been the home and personal vision of Thomas Madison, the Hand of God, the People's Friend, the Living Word, the Great Healer. Thomas Madison, born Eric Kravely, poor and lecherous and angry until at thirty-two he had given up selling perfumes and found his true vocation. Contributors who gave enough (five million dollars, according to the Press, but they had that figure too low) were flown out to GOG, for a personal audience and special treatment. That treatment included visions guaranteed to send them home reeling, their minds receptive to even bigger suggestions of support. Those special effects had never been documented. If they were still operating, our visit might be wilder than Germani realized.

We docked, and that ended my speculations. The Shuttle operated in a shirt-sleeve environment, but the inside of GOG would be, at least initially, exposed to the vacuum and temperatures of open space. The four of us climbed into our suits. In spite of all our practicing, Celia seemed to have no idea what she was doing, and I had to help her with the clasps and seals.

The attitude control system of GOG was still functioning, and it held the Christ-figure always pointing toward Earth. That displayed a clean-lined, beautiful design, the best that money could buy. The dock and living quarters were on the far side, hidden from Earth-view, and our final approach had told quite a different story. The back of GOG was little more than an open frame, with the habitation sphere attached to the center of the cross. We could see the crude welds on the girders, and a tangle of cables that held the whole structure in balance. Everything looked dark, and somehow dirty, as though it had hung there in space

for a million years. The shuttle ship that Thomas Madison used to bring his visitors to GOG had, by no accident, lacked observation ports.

It was typical of Vilfredo Germani that our approach to GOG was televised, and that his first act when we were inside the Glory Of God was to tape a lecture for subsequent transmission. He had his sponsors to satisfy, and although he was a superb scientist he had even better showman's instincts. Thomas Madison would have appreciated him.

However, the television program could also be considered a foolhardy act. Madison's followers had not died with him. To millions of the faithful, back on Earth, the invasion of the Glory Of God for secular purposes was simple sacrilege. It had been six years now, but the followers were still loyal and Madison had always attracted extremists. When he returned home, Germani would be a target for everything from vilification to assassination attempts.

With McCollum's help I set up the camera just inside the dock. A corridor leading to the interior of GOG stretched away dark behind Germani's suited figure and added a suitable element of mystery. While I adjusted the camera angle, McCollum searched around for a power outlet. He tested it with an ammeter, and grunted with satisfaction.

"Still juice here. That's going to save us a whole lot of trouble." Bright fluorescents came on, and threw a harsh pattern of yellow light and black shadows across the beams and partitions of the chamber. Germani looked around him, nodded at me to start recording, and stared straight into the camera.

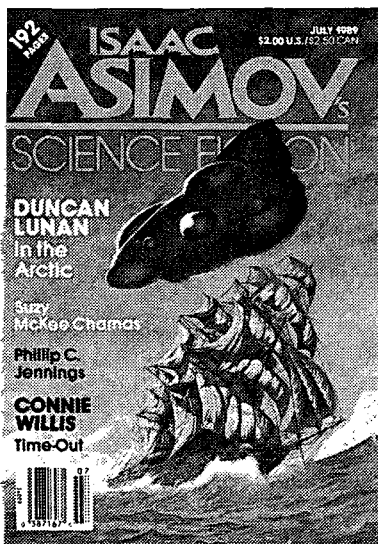
"The question has been with us now for more than forty years," he said easily. "Is spacetime quantized, and if so, how? We hope that in the next two weeks we will be able to provide a definite answer."

I had heard him talk before, and he knew all the tricks. If he had not happened to have the talent to be a top scientist, he would have made his living easily as a salesman. Grab them in the first second, and then you can give your spiel at leisure. Not that the average person would consider spacetime quantization much of a grabber, but Germani was now addressing his funding agencies, science writers, and fellow scientists (in roughly that order).

"Planck and Einstein and Bohr started this," he went on, "over a century ago. Planck first proposed that in certain circumstances energy must be emitted only in discrete units—quanta—rather than being continuous. Einstein extended that idea to more general circumstances, and then Bohr applied it to the electronic transitions in atoms. We can call this process *first quantization*, the quantization of energy levels and energy emission."

It was astonishing to see how his manner changed when the camera was on him. Germani modeled his public presence on his fellow-coun-

THIS YEAR ENTER ANOTHER DIMENSION.



**ISAAC
ASIMOV'S**
SCIENCE FICTION

**SUBSCRIBE NOW
AND SAVE 25% OFF
THE COVER PRICE**

**CALL TOLL-FREE
1-800-333-4108**

- ☐ Please send me 18 issues of ISAAC ASIMOV'S
SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE for only
\$26.97—I save 25% off the newsstand price.
☐ Please send me 8 issues for only \$11.97.

Mail to: **Isaac Asimov's**
P.O. Box 7058
Red Oak, IA 51591

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

☐ Payment Enclosed ☐ Bill Me

☐ Charge
(Circle one)



Card# _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

OUTSIDE US & POSS., 8 for \$13.97, 18 for \$29.97
(CASH WITH ORDER US FUNDS). PLEASE ALLOW
6-8 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY OF YOUR FIRST ISSUE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

H4SC-6

tryman, fellow physicist, and idol, Enrico Fermi. A few minutes ago he had been nervous and jumpy; now, even with the confining presence of the spacesuit, he was all relaxed affability. There was even a self-deprecating little smile on his face, as though to say that he knew the audience was familiar with all this, but he had to repeat it anyway.

"The next step was taken about 1930," he went on. "Heisenberg, Pauli, and Dirac quantized the electromagnetic field itself—*second quantization*." As he spoke the lights in the chamber flickered and dimmed to a level much too low for the cameras. Germani swore, changed at once into an irritable physicist, and swung round to McCollum.

"What the devil's this? I thought we had electric power."

While he was speaking, the lights dropped even further. A deep, throbbing hum sounded in my ears (radio-frequency induction in my suit). A blue haze filled the airless chamber, and within it flashing letters formed: THE GLORY OF GOD, THE GLORY OF GOD, THE GLORY OF GOD.

I heard Celia's gasp. "What's happening?"

"Part of the visitors' reception routine." I was already heading along the entry corridor, followed closely by Malcolm McCollum. "The system must still be turned on, we triggered it when we docked. Now we have to find the power control center."

McCollum was moving on past me. "Which way?" he asked over his suit phone. We had come to a branch in the corridor.

"This one, for a bet." I took the upward leg and followed it for twenty meters, until I found myself at an airlock. "This is the way to the real interior. I'll go back for the others. I'll bet the welcoming system switches off as soon as there's no one in the chamber."

McCollum grunted as he moved to study the lock controls. "You may be right, Jimmy. Go do it. Maybe you'll be more useful than I thought. I'm going to have a go at this airlock. If we have a breathable atmosphere inside, things will go a lot easier setting up our experiment."

As I returned to the docking area I took a closer look at the corridor walls. GOG had been deserted and empty for six years now, circling the globe like a dark monument to Madison's dreams. We were the first people to set foot on the habitat in all that time, but once the lights were on everything still shone new and gleaming. The Glory Of God.

By the time that I got there Germani had become tired of waiting and returned to the shuttle to oversee the unloading of his experimental equipment. The crates were floating in now, seven of them. Celia was opening each one and inspecting the contents. These instruments would remain in vacuum—they were designed to do so—until they could be deployed in precise positions along GOG's unequal arms.

Everything had survived the trip up from Earth, and by the time that Germani reappeared and heard that the equipment was fine, air and full

power were available in the interior. Suddenly the head of the party was beaming again, waving his hands and eager to get out of his suit.

Time to celebrate. We had finished Phase One of what Vilfredo Germani unblushingly described as "the most important physics experiment ever performed by humans."

Celia Germani is short and blond; ash blond, North Italian blond. Left uncombed—as it usually is—the hair of her head clusters to tight ringlets. She disdains the use of makeup. Her skin is naturally dark, and she loves to sunbathe naked. It is a surprise to find fair, sun-baked hair on her tanned legs, in her armpits, and in a broad, golden swath along her belly from pubes to navel.

Before I sought out Celia she was, in her own charming words, "almost a virgin" at twenty-seven. Blame that on her father. He had turned the mind of his only child so effectively to physics that until I came on the scene there had been no time for much else. Now Celia wanted to make up for lost opportunities.

Five hours after our arrival at GOG, the first stage of the occupation was complete. We had chosen living quarters not far from the main lock, set up our monitors for air and power, eaten a makeshift meal, and gone to bed. In the excitement of liftoff, ascent, and rendezvous, no one had slept for thirty-six hours.

As soon as McCollum and Germani were out of sight, Celia drifted into my room. She slipped off her clothes and wriggled into my sleeping bag. "Jimmy?"

"No."

She giggled. "Here I am."

"Don't you ever sleep?" I responded to her kiss, but my head was full of my own thoughts and worries. I did not want company.

"Jimmy, we're in freefall. Remember?"

I remembered. It had been a point of persuasion to Celia, one reason for my presence with the experimental party. Sex in zero gee. I had talked of it as an ecstatic experience, making up the details as I went along. Now Celia was calling me on it.

My body did its part, willingly if not enthusiastically. Perhaps the lack of gravity did add some extra dimension to our actions, for although my mind was calm and detached as Celia gasped and shuddered against me, I had the feeling of consciousness expanding outwards, concentric waves of my awareness that swelled to encompass the whole of GOG. Something was out there, something strange.

While we lay coupled I wandered mentally through the rest of the habitat's interior, the part that we had not yet explored. We had encountered no more of Thomas Madison's planned miracles, but even with-

out them the Glory Of God induced a feeling of uneasiness, of events poised to happen.

I wondered. What had they left behind here, the followers of Madison, when they fled to Earth?

The Church of Christ Ascendant, the heart of Madison's empire, had collapsed at the moment of his death, days before the organization was due to be hit by Earth authorities with tax evasion and criminal charges. The staff had hurried away from the Glory Of God, panic-stricken that they might be stranded five hundred miles above the Earth. Many of them had arrived on the surface just in time to be sent to jail for fraud and extortion.

The habitat had emptied with no long goodbyes, no attempt to put the place into mothballs, no time to put the power supplies on standby status. (Will the last person to leave the Glory Of God please turn out the lights.)

I had learned the details of Madison's death through the news media, just like anyone else. To his devout followers it was not the fact of his death that was intolerable; it was its ignominious nature.

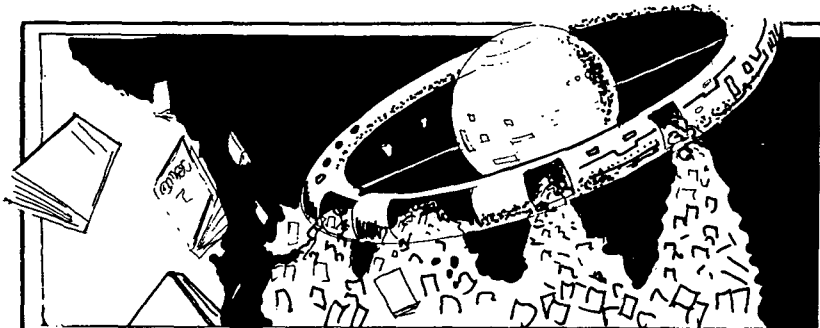
Part of Madison's plan required that he return to Earth from GOG every month or two for personal contacts and minor miracles. Everywhere he went he offered gifts: printed prayers, signed photographs, little silvery reproductions of GOG. To his minor contributors, people who had given fifty dollars, there was a little plastic telescope, cost maybe a quarter, that would let you see the details on the orbiting cross quite easily. For the sceptics, or those who were wavering, he would call on the power of Faith and hold his hand in a naked flame without being burned, stop his heart for two minutes, or stare full into the sun without being blinded.

The little tricks were nothing in themselves, but they added to his image.

Image: he was all image, crafted by the most skillful and professional public relations campaign in history. GOG's messages were sent by television and radio to two hundred countries, and to every one he projected a different personality, even used a different name. He was Thomas Madison only in the United States. Was he really an American, a Chinese, a Russian, Brazilian, or European? No one could say. Subtle plastic surgery had shaped his nose just so, adjusted the spacing and shape of his eyes, modeled his cheekbones, defined his hairline. Surgery had given him the features of the world, made him a face for all nations. Few people knew the man behind the façade, but everyone agreed on one thing: compared with Thomas Madison, every previous religious leader and fundraiser had been a fumbling amateur.

And then he had been destroyed, six years ago, by something so stupid.

Women threw themselves at Madison when he visited Earth; young



WAREHOUSE SALE

Our warehouse is full—full of stellar back issues of *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. That's why we're having our first warehouse sale. For only \$9.95 plus postage and handling, we will send you an assortment of 10 classic issues of *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* or *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. That's less than \$1.00 per issue, an unprecedented savings.

Please send your check or money order (no COD's please) to:

Warehouse Sale
Davis Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 40.
Vernon, N.J. 07462

Please send me

- _____ An assortment of 10 issues of *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* (\$9.95 plus \$3.50 postage and handling).
- _____ An assortment of 10 issues of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* (\$9.95 plus \$3.50 postage and handling).

Please send to

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

While we cannot accommodate requests for specific issues, we guarantee that you will be delighted with your surprise assortment and will enjoy discovering new stories and authors. Also, at this great price, these back issues will make wonderful gifts for your science-fiction-loving friends.

All 10 issues will be delivered to you within 6 to 8 weeks.

H4KC-6

and old, ugly and beautiful, rich and poor. He could have had discreet affairs with a hundred or a thousand of them. Instead he took the wife of Jack Burdon, his oldest friend and staunchest supporter. Burdon led the Church of Christ Ascendant in Australia. He would do anything for Madison, but when he caught the two of them in the act on Madison's two-hundred foot yacht he had gone temporarily crazy. According to his own confession he had shot Madison five times in the head, slit his throat, and thrown the body to the sharks and saltwater crocodiles that patrol the coast of northern Australia. He had beaten his wife so severely that she was now a grinning vegetable. Then Burdon had told everything he knew to the international police and the taxation authorities, providing the evidence that sent a couple of hundred top people in the Church to jail.

A great financial empire (fifty billion dollars, tax free, and still growing) had vanished between a woman's thighs. Audits revealed that most of the money had vanished with it, like rain on dry sand, leaving no sign of its existence.

There remained of Madison's ministry only the bewildered followers, still grieving for what they had lost, and this empty shell, the Glory Of God, sweeping dark and silent through the star-filled sky. How many people, every night, still looked up longingly and hoped for the return of the glittering cross?

Celia interrupted my thoughts, gripping me hard and whispering in my ear. "Jimmy. What's that—do you hear it?"

It was a murmur of sound, coming from all around us. The whole body of GOG was in tiny movement, creaking and flexing, a Titan stretching in his sleep.

I groped at my side until I found my watch and looked at its luminous dial. "It's nothing bad. We'll get this every fifty minutes or so."

"But what is it?"

"Thermal cycling. GOG goes in and out of Earth-shadow every orbit, cools down or heats up. Everything contracts or expands."

She snuggled against me, enfolding me with her arms and legs. "You're so smart. You could be anything you want to be. How did I live before I had you?" She moved one hand to stroke my chest, running her fingers up along my collarbone and into the hollow of my neck. "You'll never find anyone who loves you as much as I do. Never. Tell me you love me, Jimmy. Tell me you don't know how you lived before you found me."

Just a couple more days, I said to myself. Then I told Celia that I loved her. I did not tell her how I lived before I found her.

The next morning we were ready to go on with Germani's experiment. Malcolm McCollum was at GOG's main power board, checking circuits.

I was with him, making my own analysis of the places where power had been available when we first arrived at the habitat.

McCollum patched in the compact fusion unit that we brought up from Earth, then paused with his big fist clamped on one of the switches. "Now this would be a real fun test. If I throw it, we light up the whole of GOG. Ninety megawatts. We only draw half that for the experiment."

I looked at my watch and shook my head. "Don't do it, Mac. We're on the night side. People down there would get the wrong idea."

"Ah." He grinned at me. "Nice thought, though—get the religious maggots a bit excited. But you're probably right, Jimmy. Stay here while I tell Germani we're all set."

I was happy to have time to myself. While McCollum was with Vilfredo Germani I confirmed what I already suspected. One power board, fully operating, was linked to a hidden part of GOG. Some region of the habitat was inaccessible to normal entry. I could trace it by following the power lines.

I did not have time to follow up at once. Germani was bursting with impatience, and Celia and I were sent outside to string the array of interferometers and magnetometers along GOG's jutting arms. The placement was critical, and tightly controlled through an array of lasers. It called for no real thought, but for concentration and steadiness. I found my hands trembling within my suit. I had slept for only a couple of hours. Once Celia had fallen asleep I had wandered the interior of GOG, studying the layout of the habitation sphere.

As we slowly installed the instruments she reviewed the whole experiment for me. She went into details that I could not possibly have understood. After a few minutes I realized that she was doing it for her own benefit, not mine. It had dawned on me some time ago that although Vilfredo Germani was the showman and fund-raiser, the fundamental ideas came from Celia. She had devised the crucial test for "third quantization"—the test to see if space-time itself had a granular structure, rather than being continuous.

"Not really grains," Celia said now. "More like little loops in twelve-space. And the loops are so small, they can never be observed. Every probe we can devise is twenty orders of magnitude too big. The uncertainty principle guarantees that we will never do any better."

"If you can't hope to measure it, what's the point of the experiment?"

"We look for what's left over. Residual effects." She was peering at a Mössbauer calibrator, locking the position of an array of magnetometers to one part in a million billion. "The individual twists can't be observed, but there are residual effects of their interaction. Remember, things don't have to be seen directly to have physical meaning. Think of black holes. Think of quarks."

Soon after I found Celia, I had asked her what *use* the Germani theory and experiment could be. What did it matter what was going on, if it was happening at a scale a sextillion times too small to see?

Celia had chided me. "It doesn't matter *today*, but in fifty or a hundred years it will change the whole world. We're not talking a minor experiment, you know. This is a lot bigger than Michelson-Morley, it's probing the roots of reality itself. What we're doing will go into all the schoolbooks one day, like Newton's apple and Einstein's falling elevator. When experiment confirms our theory, we'll kill all the quantum dragons with one thrust."

Quantum dragons. The way Celia described them, the quantum paradoxes were real dragons, destroying physicists everywhere with their razor teeth and fiery breath. Schrödinger's cat, Wigner's friend and infinite regression, Everett and Wheeler's many worlds, Chang's cascade, Ponteira's dilemma; the dragons gnawed away at the roots of the tree of physics, and no one had been able to slay them. They all involved the same questions: what was the condition of the quantum state vector, before and after observation? How did observation change it? For most of a century, scientists had possessed a set of computational procedures that allowed them to make calculations of quantum phenomena. But it was a set of *ad hoc* methods that happened to give the right answers. Beneath them was the void, populated only by paradoxes.

If spacetime itself were quantized in a certain way, said the Germani theory, then all those paradoxes could be disposed of at once. The theory also suggested a crucial experiment, and until that was performed Vilfredo and Celia Germani had done no more than propose an interesting hypothesis. Fortunately the experiment was within reach of today's technology—just. It called for the use of a large, minimally-active structure and a microgravity environment. There was exactly one known body that fitted the requirement: GOG.

The media found a certain irony in the fact that Germani could use Thomas Madison's facilities on GOG to seek a truth that Madison himself would have hated. In his preaching, he had described science as a sinful delusion and a tool of Satan.

Germani, gifted fund-raiser that he was, could not afford to buy GOG, or even to rent its use. No one could. After Madison died his revenues had been declared taxable income, and the Church was hit for billions in unpaid taxes. It had no money left, and the top officials were lucky if they stayed out of jail. So the property had been taken over by the U.S. government. But it was worthless—and inaccessible—to almost everyone. The habitat had a good orbit for an automated spacecraft, but a very bad one for most crewed facilities.

Vilfredo Germani had gone to the government with a clever proposal.

He asked for the use of GOG and all its facilities, free, for six months. It would remain government property, and any inventions or patents that developed as a result of the experiment would belong jointly to the government and to Germani. The government would also share revenue from sale of media rights. More than that, Germani would pay all costs of the transportation and the experimental equipment. From the government point of view, it was a no-risk proposal.

From our personal point of view, though, it was far from risk-free. We would be generating a huge pulse of power, confined and applied in a novel way. Germani had made one fact very clear to me and to Malcolm McCollum: a second reason for performing the experiment out in space was because of possible unpredicted physical effects.

The experiment had been scheduled to take place when GOG was traveling over the United States. In addition to our live broadcast, television cameras in every major city would be pointed upwards, hoping to observe some visible evidence of the result—hoping also, I suspected, for unforeseen calamity and associated fireworks. Successful physics experiments make less interesting news than disasters.

Two hours before the experiment was scheduled to begin, we had evidence that GOG was still capable of producing its own surprises.

McCollum was concluding a full-scale dry run, feeding energy through the network. As the power input reached a maximum, every sound in the interior—even the ones that we were making ourselves—faded to inaudibility. In that unnatural hush, a whispering voice spoke in our ears, just loud enough to be understood, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay. Vengeance is mine.”

It was Thomas Madison’s recorded voice, we knew that. Just as we knew that the God of Thomas Madison was the rough god of the Old Testament, a deity of revenge, blood, and savage justice. “Vengeance is mine,” could have been the slogan of the Church, a *leitmotif* that ran through all the broadcasts and promotional materials. Madison had made the fate of unbelievers very clear. They would burn in hell—he described that hell in gruesome detail—for eternity, with no hope of salvation. Curiously, this seemed to be one of the Church of Christ Ascendant’s main attractions. The faithful sent letters in with their contributions, proposing new torments.

Madison’s enemies mocked him and denounced his miracles as expensive fakes. Just gimmicky effects. That was easy to do sitting in front of a television screen on Earth, but here on GOG, with that soft, menacing voice in your ear . . .

Well, we all shivered a little, I think, before McCollum could isolate the circuit involved, and cut it out of the power system. There was no

thought of postponing the experiment. Germani had made commitments. The show must go on.

He had the action organized as tightly as a ballet, with himself at the center of attention. Celia had a minor role, and no one else would appear. I had been banished to the power control room with Vilfredo Germani's direct order to "keep an eye on things." And stay out of the way, said his tone. The experiment was in three phases, extending over a four-hour period. Germani did not want to see me in the main chamber with the recording cameras during that interval.

It suited my needs perfectly. I had decided that the best possible time for me to do what I had to do would be during the experiment. The others would be so focused on that, they wouldn't even think of me.

I went to the power control room and waited. Forty minutes before zero hour, I left that assigned position and moved down the long axis of GOG, heading for a region that was supposed to be nothing more than unused storage space. Within two hundred meters I had come to the outer bulkhead and triple hull. Beyond them should be nothing but vacuum. I knew differently. Hidden power lines, concealed within ventilation shafts, ran on and through the thick metal wall. They had to lead to somewhere.

It took five minutes to find the key. Electrically activated, part of the bulkhead slid aside, producing a circular opening six feet across. I had put on my suit before I left the power room, but I did not need it. The aperture led to another set of chambers, each with a breathable atmosphere. The different parts of GOG when we had arrived had been at wildly differing temperatures, depending on the orientation of each section relative to the sun and on thermal coupling to other parts. This set of chambers had its own triply-redundant thermostats and was precisely controlled to twenty degrees above freezing point.

The first three rooms were concentric shells of living space, each well-equipped with entertainment materials and with receiving equipment for broadcasts from Earth. They also possessed heavy wall shielding against the effects of solar flares, but they were otherwise conventional.

The fourth, and innermost . . .

I opened the door; held my breath. In the center of the room stood the blue-grey barrel of a Schindler hibernation unit. Eighteen million dollars of desperation. Badly-wounded or sick patients could live in one of these almost indefinitely, intravenously fed and with body functions ticking over at just a few degrees above zero, until donor organs or improved medical techniques gave them a chance of recovery.

But you didn't have to be sick. I examined the settings and found a quintuply-redundant group of timing units, each set to trigger nine

months from now. I overrode all of them, initiated immediate reawakening, and sat down on the floor in front of the unit.

Even at fastest reanimation, it would take a while. The heart activity trace had been showing one beat per minute. Now as drugs dripped in through the I/V's, the body temperature crept up, a degree every hundred and forty seconds. The pulse rate rose with it.

The minutes dragged on. I waited. In half an hour the overhead lights flickered.

I looked at my watch. The first part of Germani's experiment was in full swing, and I was seeing the effects of the power drain. Helical surges of magnetic field ran the length of GOG now, tightening on themselves. This was the most direct test of third quantization, but also the least sensitive. Celia didn't hold out much hope for it—the second test, two hours from now, was the one she said she would bet her money on.

Body temperature, seventy-eight degrees. The bronchspirometer showed that breathing was at normal levels and had near-normal gaseous composition. There ought to be stirrings of consciousness within the Schindler unit. I peered in through the narrow plastic cover on the upper rim, and could see nothing. The heartbeat was strong at forty-seven. My own pulse was up over a hundred. I closed my eyes, and told myself that three-quarters of an hour was nothing compared with six years.

I had never seen a Schindler unit in operation before. When the reawakening cycle was complete, what happened? The reanimated subject was not likely to pop out like a piece of bread in a toaster, but I dared not open it from the outside in case I was too soon.

Finally there was a sigh from inside the unit, a protest at sleep disturbed. The lock on the front of the unit clicked. The door did not open, but it was now unsecured. I reached out a cold and trembling hand, pulled gently, and a moment later I was staring in on the dazed face of Thomas Madison.

"Jack?" he said uncertainly. He lifted his head a few inches from the supporting web. "Jack?"

"Jack Burdon is dead, Eric." I spoke slowly and clearly. "This is Jim."

He gasped, and his face took on the expression I had waited years to see. "Where am—what did—" He could speak, but only just.

"You're up here on the Glory Of God, Eric. Everything worked out just the way you planned."

He was doing his best to move forward, but he was still feeble. I thrust him back with one hand. He shivered and cowered away within the unit. "But Jack—what happened to Jack?"

"*Vengeance is mine*, Eric. Remember? Your favorite line. You want to know how I found out? There were rumors, they came through the grapevine even when I was in prison. Wild talk of resurrection. It made no

sense, not with Thomas Madison dead. But they never found a body, did they? That made me think. And then I learned that they never found the Church's money, either. I went to see Jack when I got out, and he told me everything he knew."

He shook his head.

"He wouldn't talk, you mean?" I said. "Not loyal old Jack. Ah, but you're wrong. He just needed persuasion, some of the treatment he gave his wife. Why did you make Jack an insider, Eric, and not me? I was with you longer than he was."

He couldn't speak, but I knew the answer. Even Jack Burdon had been told only a small part of it. When you plan something so big, the fewer people involved, the better.

"Jim, I couldn't tell you. Don't you see that, I had to keep everything tight—keep it secret." His voice was coming back, his face showed a trace of color, and with that came a little more courage. "It was falling apart on us, you knew that as well as I did. We had to wrap it up, lie low and start over. But I wouldn't have forgotten you."

I leaned forward and pressed his windpipe, not hard enough to cut off breathing. "Now that, I'm prepared to believe. I know the grand design. Want me to tell it to you? I had it from Jack when he was too far gone for lying."

It was clean and simple. Thomas Madison dead and gone, vanished for seven years, until the heat was off the Church. Jack Burdon and a couple of others with enough money and resources to make sure that the Glory Of God went unvisited. Then, the whispers around the Earth. Thrilling words, of death and transfiguration. After exactly seven years (numbers are important) the Glory Of God, long dead and lifeless, blazes forth again in the night sky. Thomas Madison, resurrected on GOG, broadcasts again to all the people of Earth.

"The New Dawn," I said. "That would be the Word. And for anyone from the old order? Most of us died in prison, the way we were supposed to. Special bad treatment, bought and paid for with Church funds. But you wouldn't have forgotten the rest of us—until we were gone, and it was safe to forget us."

He didn't bother to deny it. His eyes looked from side to side, avoiding me. I noticed that his appearance was slightly different. He had been *enhanced*, features thinner, eyes wider and more gleaming to fit the image of a reborn prophet.

"I wouldn't have hurt you, Jim," he said at last. "I wouldn't. Not my own brother."

"Wouldn't hurt me? Five years in that stinking South American prison, with the filth and the lice and the bad water." I pressed harder on his throat. "I was supposed to die there. But we're tough, aren't we, the

Kravelly boys? You don't kill us with rat bites and with rotting garba instead of food. We thrive on it. We lie in our rags, and we think."

He was slowly suffocating. His hands were pushing at me, but he was too weak.

"I got out of prison, Eric, and I did what I had to." I couldn't help myself, I was pressing harder on his windpipe. "I had my talk with Jack Burdon. Found out about Vilfredo Germani, then fawned and groveled to meet him, that egocentric little Italian shit. Screwed Celia Germani until she couldn't see straight, even though she's hairy and sweaty and I've had more fun fucking the monkeys they brought in to São Paulo jail. Ass-kissed and fornicated my way up here. I did it, Eric. I did it all, whatever it took. You wouldn't hurt me, you say? Then I'm not hurting you."

He was dying, jerking in the harness. I wanted to slow down, to keep him alive, to make it last. I had looked forward to this moment for a year, savoring the idea. But I couldn't hold back. When I had myself under control he lolled already lifeless in the Schindler hibernation unit.

I looked at his starting eyes and swung the unit closed. All my anger drained away as I turned to leave the chamber. And there, in the doorway, stood Celia Germani.

Her face was pasty-white and her eyes lacked focus. She was not wearing a suit, and I could see her midriff quivering. "I came to find you," she said tonelessly. "The second phase of the experiment is going to start. I wanted you to be there with me. There were signs from phase one that this will give us just what we need, so I wanted you with me to see it."

Celia was on autopilot, babbling randomly because she did not know what else to do. But I knew exactly what to do. She had seen me kill my brother, probably heard what I said, knew who I was.

She had to go out of the airlock. I could snap my suit closed, take her there, and hold her during evacuation. Accident, someone new to space. Nothing to point to me.

I started forward.

She must have read my face, because she turned and tried to flee. Too late. I grabbed a fistful of her blond, curly hair and stopped her before she could move two feet. At that point her legs and arms went limp and I was able to drag her along with me easily.

No point in speech. I reached up with one hand to close my suit, holding her firmly in the other, and moved as fast as I could. It was more than a hundred meters to the nearest lock, back the way I had come. We seemed to take forever, but I did not expect to meet anyone. Germani and McCollum were too wrapped up in the experiment. When we had gone maybe fifty meters, a whining sound came from the walls of GOG.

Celia began to struggle in my grasp. "Phase Two," she cried, in the tones of a prayer. "Oh, Phase Two."

We were close to the maximum point of field intensity. The whine became a shriek, the shriek an insane howl; the whole structure went into rapid vibration. The oscillation continued. The outlines of walls and fixtures softened like a tuning fork at the moment of striking.

I froze and tightened my grip on Celia. After a few more seconds our surroundings steadied and firmed.

But Celia was no longer distinct to my eyes. She blurred, split, became two fuzzy images. One of them was pulling hard to free herself, the other slumped hopelessly in my arms. The images shivered, split again.

Celia was free, flying away down the corridor.

Celia was pulling hard against my grip.

Celia had bent her head to my right hand and was biting it hard.

Celia was fainting in my arms.

Celia was stabbing at my eyes with a knife from the pocket of her uniform.

Celia lay senseless where I had flung her against the corridor wall.

Celia . . .

. . . blurred and split, blurred and split, blurred and split. The chamber was filled with phantom Celia's, running, turning, struggling, attacking, biting, fainting, bleeding, weeping, screaming.

I tried to grapple with them, all of them. But now I was dividing, holding Celia with a hundred hands that became a thousand hands that became an uncountable infinity of hands. I beat at the flying shapes and felt myself spread all along the corridor. I willed my body—all my bodies—to turn and fly back the way I had come. The spectral Celias suddenly vanished. At last I could move. There was a wrenching, sideways jerk as I encountered and passed through some central focus of the field, then I was coalescing once more to a single body.

Back I went to the innermost chamber, slamming the external lock. I sagged against it as it clanged tight. Suddenly I felt safe.

But how safe? For all I knew the rest of GOG had been destroyed completely by Phase Two of Germani's experiment. After I had felt reality crumble and fission and fragment, it was hard to know what was left.

I went to the display screens and turned them on with frozen fingers. They showed news broadcasts beamed up from Earth. At least that much of GOG was working. I flicked from channel to channel, expecting every one to have live coverage of the experiment.

There was nothing, not a single mention. Finally I discovered a news show with one small item about Vilfredo Germani. He had just announced that he would seek government permission to perform some type of ex-

periment on the Glory Of God space habitat. The show was mostly interested in the protests of Madison's old followers.

That had happened nine months ago. I remembered the event. Yet here I was, alive, breathing. Nine months ago neither Vilfredo nor Celia Germani knew that I existed.

A frightening realization crept into my mind. No one knew I was here. I was alone on GOG, without food or water. I could not survive for nine months, not even for one month. Even a crash rescue operation would take longer than that to reach me.

I switched off the display screens and moved to a chair.

Action, not panic. There was an answer, and it was here in the chamber with me: the Schindler hibernation unit. It could sustain me almost indefinitely, until a shuttle could be sent from Earth.

But first I had to remove Eric's body and dispose of it. I moved across to the unit, studying it for the first time since I had re-entered the chamber. I stopped in shock. The chamber was active. A heartbeat trace showed, forty beats a minute. Body temperature, sixty-eight degrees. Light but steady breathing.

I thought I had killed Eric—surely I had killed him. But my brother had returned from the dead. *Vengeance is mine.*

I shivered. After a moment, rational thought returned. There must have been a flicker of life in him when I left, and the hibernation unit had done what it was supposed to do for a sick occupant. It had taken the steps necessary for survival.

I hesitated for no more than a moment. What I had done once, I could do again; this time, more thoroughly. Eric would have to die.

Action. I seized the door and canceled the lock, noting the warning message—PREMATURE OPENING MAY BE A LIFE-THREATENING ACT—that appeared on the display. A flurry of activity came from the unit's monitors, determined to sustain the life within in every way possible.

I ignored the messages and the sensor readings. If it came to a fight between me and the hibernation unit, I was sure I could win. I knew more roads to death than it knew to life.

I heaved the heavy door open. As I did so it occurred to me that Eric was not dead only because I had never killed him. I laughed at the logic of it. If all that the Germani experiment had done was to throw me back nine months, Eric at that time was still alive.

But that could be changed.

I peered inside the unit. And then I could no longer act. I knew I could not win. Reality was not that simple.

I could not win. I *cannot* win, no matter how long I stay here, no matter

what I do within this chamber. The quantum dragons, the razor claws that rend the fabric of reality, are too complex. They have won already.

Thomas Madison, the prophet that Eric and I designed together, is no more. A long time ago it had been a joke between us: would he be the incarnation of our ideas, or would I? It had been decided by the toss of a coin, the simplest chance event. Eric became Thomas Madison.

That Thomas Madison is gone now. And Eric may be dead, or perhaps in this universe he never was. But the living, breathing face that stares peacefully from the hibernation tank is familiar to me, so familiar.

It is my own. ●

NEXT ISSUE

Nebula- and World Fantasy Award-winner **Lucius Shepard** returns next month with another of his "Dragon Griaule" stories, our September cover story, "The Father of Stones." Like his famous stories "The Scalehunter's Beautiful Daughter" and "The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule," this one takes place in a land dominated by the immobile but still-living body of an immense, mountain-huge dragon, enchanted into stillness in some sorcerous battle in the unimaginably distant past, so long ago that forests and villages have sprung up on the dragon's mountainous flanks. In "The Father of Stones," a grisly murder brings Advocate Adam Korrogly into the courtroom for the most important trial of his career, but his investigation of the case soon leads him deep into a dangerous maze of betrayal and intrigue, murder and magic, and brings him into conflict with the naked power and implacable evil will of the great Dragon Griaule himself. . . . This is Shepard at his evocative best. From distant worlds of magic, new writer **Allen M. Steele** then takes us to near-future Mars, to the site of the enigmatic Face on Mars, to explore a dangerous maze of another sort, a mysterious and deadly alien maze older than time, and spins a riveting high-tech tale of political intrigue, scientific infighting, and intrepid exploration in the face of overwhelming odds, in "Red Planet Blues." This is a major new novella by a major new hard-science writer, and will probably be one of the year's major stories; don't miss it.

ALSO IN SEPTEMBER: **Bruce Sterling** spins a very odd kind of Alternate Worlds story, in the funny, hard-edged, and poignant story of "Dori Bangs"; new writer **Deborah Wessell** gives us a stylish look at a subtle kind of Temptation, in "As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us"; Nebula-winner **Nancy Kress** offers us a fascinating study of the true meaning of compatibility, in "People Like Us"; Hugo- and World Fantasy Award-winner **Avram Davidson** takes us back into the turbulent past to witness some "Events Which Took Place a Day Before Other Events"; and hot new writer **Eileen Gunn** returns to—notice that I did *not* say "sock it to us"—unravel one of the Great Unsolved Mysteries of the Universe, in the very silly "The Sock Story." Plus an array of columns and features. Look for our September issue on sale on your newsstands on July 25, 1989.

CURSE OF THE SASQUATCH'S WIFE

When he mows the grass neighbor children scream,
passing cars collide, the postman never rings.

Dinner is a dirty affair: marinara on the walls,
wine staining the carpet, another chair in splinters.

Afterwards he scrapes his canines with a ballpeen
and hums the overture to *Death and Transfiguration*.

When photographers appear, when reporters cover the lawn,
he runs upstairs and hides with a fifth or two of rum.

She must stand on the porch and field their questions,
which grow more intimate and salacious with each visit.

As her voice falters, flashbulbs explode en masse,
staining her vision with lurid and twisting wraiths.

Each night he follows her doggedly from room to room
of their modest two-bedroom, all of his fangs dripping.

—Bruce Boston

SPECIAL DELIVERY

by Lee Wallingford and Carol Deppe

Having recently finished a young adult novel, Lee Wallingford is currently at work on a murder mystery featuring a Forest Service background. "Special Delivery" is her first science fiction sale.

Carol Deppe is a mad scientist turned writer. Her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Amazing*, *Redbook*, *Omnif*, *Horticulture*, and elsewhere. This is her first story for *Asimov*.

art: Patricia Morrissey



There was a knock at the office door. Dr. Anna Erdman leaned back in her chair and considered pretending she wasn't in. She glanced out the window to the quad where students hurried through the autumn sunshine at the end of a Friday afternoon. It would have been nice to go home early for a change. She sighed.

"Come in."

The man who entered was stocky and muscular with unruly dark hair in need of a trim. Without introducing himself or waiting for an invitation, he drew up a chair and sat down. Then he took out a card and handed it to her.

Steven Carr, it said, Special Investigator, Biological Weapons Team. The words set off an alarm somewhere in the back of Anna's head. Nothing good could come of this.

"You can phone the operator and check the number," Carr said. "Then call it and ask for Mallory. He'll confirm my identity."

"Mallory who?"

"Just Mallory."

"I don't recall arranging an appointment with you," Anna said coldly.

"Please call the number," Carr said. Then when Anna didn't move, he added, "Pretty please?"

The words were so incongruous they jarred Anna into laughter. She grimaced and picked up the phone. Five minutes later she hung up and turned back to Carr.

"All right," she said. "What do you want?"

"I want to ask you a few questions about Greg Thurston."

Of course it had to do with Greg. The mental alarm rang louder. She nodded slightly, keeping her eyes on Carr.

"You and Dr. Thurston were friends? Good friends?"

Anna's face grew warm. Greg had not been her first lover, but he was the one who mattered, the one who had come closest to accepting her as she was. Their relationship was not secret, but it was none of Carr's business. "We spent three years together as graduate students in the same lab," she said coldly. "You either end up as friends or enemies. We were friends."

"When did you see him last?"

"A few months ago." It had been the morning after the closing session of the Genetics meetings. They had spent the night together, had breakfast, then caught flights back to homes and jobs at opposite ends of the country. They would do the same at the next set of meetings or the next conference. This had been their pattern for the past three years. Anna still hoped, though, that some day they would be able to resume a real relationship.

"When was the last time you heard from him?" Carr asked.

"Why?"

"Did you get anything in the mail from him recently?" Until that moment it had been only his job she'd disliked. She waited.

"Dr. Erdman." Carr leaned forward. "Thurston sent you a package. You probably got it in the last day or two."

She nodded unhappily. "Something's happened to him, hasn't it?"

"What makes you say that?"

"Why else would you be here?"

Carr leaned back in his chair, watching her. "Keeping quiet isn't going to help him. He's dead."

Anna sat very still, stunned. Outside her office window yellow leaves drifted to the ground, dry and sere in the failing light. Dead. Her mind stopped on the word and refused to move on.

"Dr. Erdman," Carr said softly, "your friend died because he had a certain piece of information. Chances are very good that you now have that information. The best thing is to let us handle it."

Carr was watching her. She had to say something. She heard herself answer, "I don't have any information."

"You probably wouldn't know. Thurston was a clever operative. He took too many risks, but he was smart. If I could look at that package . . ."

Anna had stopped listening. Greg had always liked taking risks. She remembered a bridge, a high bridge with the river a hundred feet below, and Greg leaping up to the handrail. He walked across up there, his lean body outlined against the sky. On the far side he jumped down with an exultant grin and turned to her, a crazy, happy light in his eyes. She was furious. Pure stupidity, she told him, but Greg just laughed. Life was too tame, he said. A little risk added a lot to the zest of living.

Now he was dead. He had finally tangled with something too risky, too big, too dangerous. She looked up at Carr. He was still watching her, reading every expression, every pause. She took a deep breath and pressed her lips together. Whatever Greg had been up to, however she might feel about it, she loved him. Had loved him. This might be her only chance to find out how and why he had died.

"I think, Mr. Carr, that you had better tell me exactly what happened."

Carr stared at Anna and she stared back. After a moment he dropped his gaze and nodded slightly. "Do you know what Thurston was doing in France?"

Anna shrugged. "He went there a lot. Calvacac has a big lab in Paris, and Greg set up their DNA branding operation."

Greg had been the world's expert in branding DNA. Though most of their work was in the same field, her interest had always been in basic research, his in applications, and he had developed a number of new

insertion techniques. At Calvacac he synthesized special pieces of DNA and inserted them into the company's strains of bacteria. When the nucleotide sequences of the DNA were translated to amino acid sequences, the first letters spelled out "Calvacac." Just like a brand on cattle, except that the brand was inherited by the offspring.

"This time he was on a seminar tour," Carr said. "He was helping us track down a certain piece of information."

"What kind of information?" Anna asked.

"A name." He gave her a long look, then went on. "Someone—someone we'll call X, is building a pair of viruses. We've seen the designs. We know who asked for them, we know the work is underway, and we know who's supposed to get them. What we don't know is who's doing it, but we think Greg found out."

Anna leaned forward as the story unfolded, sometimes watching Carr's face, sometimes turning to gaze out the window. According to Carr, X was building the viruses somewhere in Europe. Greg had set up a seminar tour, arranging to speak at various institutions about his latest work. He thought X would jump at the chance to talk with him about his techniques.

The two viruses were human viruses, A and B, derived from one weakly infective strain. The original virus could insert itself into human DNA, but it did not cause any problems. The infected person simply carried it from then on. X had beefed up the original virus, made it virulent enough to spread like a plague, but still without causing harm. That was virus A. Virus B had been developed from virus A by adding a gene for one of the more lethal bacterial toxins. A and B differed by just that one gene, but while A was harmless, B was deadly. Because the original virus had carried an exclusion factor, infection by A conferred immunity to B.

"So you infect your own group with A," Anna murmured. "Then you spread B among everyone else."

"You got it," Carr said.

Anna stared at her hands, the fingers spread out on the desk, framing Carr's ID. She and Greg had talked once—and only once—about this sort of thing. Biological weapons had been outlawed in the seventies, before she had started graduate school, but research on them continued. Everybody in her field worried about what could be done with even the most innocent knowledge they produced.

Carr probably thought he was fooling her with his double-talk about who asked for the viruses and who was supposed to get them. As though he and the people he worked for only wanted to stop what was going on, as though they had no interest in it for themselves. That was how Greg had justified things, explaining that research on biological weapons was

the best defense. She had not believed a word of it. Now Greg was dead, and here was Carr giving her the same line. She wanted to spit in his face.

She crossed her arms and tried to compose herself. A minute later she was ready to go on. "Tell me how he died."

"He was gunned down in front of the American Embassy in Paris."

The words hit her like a slap in the face. Suddenly she could see Greg, sprawled out on the pavement, blood spreading beneath his twisted body, while somewhere in the distance people shouted and ran.

Carr went on. "Thurston went on his seminar tour and he must have gotten the information. Eight days ago he was supposed to meet one of our men. We don't know what happened. Our man is missing, and a body turned up at the rendezvous point. The body of a man who belonged to Allah's Vengeance." Carr paused. "We think Allah's Vengeance killed or captured our man, then tried to run a ringer in on Thurston. But Thurston killed the ringer and ran."

Anna looked out the window at the nearly empty quad and tried to relate Carr's story to the man she had known. Secret information, killing, treachery, and danger. Somehow she was not surprised. And terrorists.

She looked back at Carr. "Someone is constructing the viruses for terrorists?"

Carr's face was grim. "Terrorists can be very persuasive."

They were both silent for a moment. Anna shook her head. "I don't see what Greg's package has to do with anything."

Carr's head jerked up. "You did get it, then. If I could just take a look . . ."

Anna shook her head again. "Tell me the rest."

Carr sighed. "There isn't much more. Thurston turned up back at Calcavac later that afternoon. He asked to use one of the labs for a bit. He was in there three days."

"Doing what?"

"No one knows. He would have been safe, anyway. Calcavac is a high security operation. Chain link around the building. Guards on the grounds and at the door. A good place to hole up if he thought he was in danger."

Anna thought for a moment. "Mr. Carr," she said softly, "if this piece of information—it's just a name, right?—is so vital, why didn't Greg just call someone? He could have phoned your Washington organization just like I did, couldn't he?"

Carr shrugged. "We don't know for sure. Thurston's contact was dead, and someone had probably just tried to kill him, too. He would have realized that meant a leak somewhere in the European operation. He might have decided he didn't know who to trust any more."

Anna was silent.

Carr went on. "We think he was trying to get the information out of the country by himself. But he sent it to you, too, as insurance—in case he didn't make it. Sent it in such a way that you wouldn't even know you had it unless something happened to him. Registered mail, so we'd be able to trace it to you."

Anna let it pass, but she wasn't satisfied. There was more to it. More, maybe, than Carr knew. Maybe something had happened to make Greg change his mind about what he was doing. Who knew what kind of game he was playing there at the end?

That part about Greg involving her without her knowledge—she could believe that, all right. He had endangered her. Used her. And she never would have known, if he'd lived. She would tell him a thing or two when—

She shook herself. He was dead. That was the whole point. She looked up at Carr. Then she looked down at her hands resting on the desk, slim hands with long, tapering fingers, stained and rough from laboratory work. Reluctantly, she opened a drawer, drew out a manila envelope, and laid it on the desk between them.

"Go ahead," she said.

Carr took a pair of disposable rubber gloves from his briefcase and pulled them on. He lifted the open flap and slipped the contents out. In his hand lay a copy of a research paper, "Control of Transcription of Early Genes in Bacteriophage Y23," by R. D. Evans. From the other side of the desk Anna could just make out the note penciled across the top: "Here's the paper you asked for. Love, Greg."

Carr read through the five brief pages, then looked up. "Why did you ask for this?"

"That's just it," Anna said. "I didn't."

Carr smiled, the first real smile of his she had seen, then quickly reverted to a poker face. "Maybe you asked for something else, though, and he sent this by mistake? Or maybe he meant to send this to someone else?"

Anna shook her head. "Not only had I never asked for it—no one would have. It's ancient history as far as DNA research goes. A real classic."

Carr looked puzzled.

"Evans was our professor," she said, "Greg's and mine. That's where I met Greg." She paused for a moment, remembering. Evans had been sixty when she started her doctorate; she had been his last student, and Greg had been the one before her. During the year before Evans' retirement, the lab had taken on a cozy, intimate feel, with only the three of them working, sometimes with a technician, but often as not on their own. Now the other two were dead.

"Evans stole Y23," she said. "He made it sound funny when he told us the story, but it was serious enough." A researcher named DeWitt, someone Evans had gone to school with, had spent ten years building Y23—a new bacterial virus with useful, unique characteristics. During that time he had not published a single paper; but once he developed Y23 all sorts of spectacular things were possible. Evans heard about it and wrote asking him for the strain. DeWitt wrote back that he would send it after he had extracted all possible useful information, and not before. Anna couldn't blame DeWitt, in a way. On the other hand, it was considered common courtesy to release a strain and trust a fellow researcher to wait until you had published. And, as Evans told it, DeWitt's letter had been particularly insulting.

"Y23 is a bacteriophage," Anna explained. "A bacterial virus. Very virulent, airborne, hell to work with. Once it gets into a lab it's in the air, on the dust, everywhere—"

Carr cleared his throat and she realized that he wasn't listening, probably had not been listening for a while. She flushed and fell silent.

Carr tapped the paper lying between them on the desk. "Why do you think Thurston sent it?"

She shrugged, suddenly exhausted. More than anything else she needed some time alone. "Maybe he couldn't remember anyone else's address, I don't know. It's yours. Take it and get out."

"I'm afraid it's not that easy," Carr said. "I'll go over this—" he glanced at the paper "—but I don't expect to find much. Thurston sent it to you for a reason."

"And I don't know what that reason was," she snapped. "I don't want to know. It's a dirty business and I don't want to get involved."

"You're already involved," Carr said. "Your friend made sure of that."

Carr finally persuaded her to wait while he went over the package with the help of various items from his briefcase. She had only the vaguest idea of what he hoped to find; microdots, ciphers, whatever. She left Carr in her office, bending over the desk with the sheets of paper spread out under a lamp. The building was deserted. Out in the hall the high, old-fashioned windows framed empty reflections. She walked down to the lab and through it to the little office in back, plugged the coffee pot in, and huddled into a chair.

"But what if somebody broke the Biological Weapons Convention?" Greg had asked. When had that been? About four years ago, Anna thought. She remembered the all-night diner, conveniently located between Evans' lab and their apartment, the awful coffee, the carrot cake untouched on her plate, and Greg staring earnestly at her over a ham sandwich. "What if someone started developing something, and you found

out about it? Would you just ignore it so you could keep your hands clean?"

"That isn't very likely," she replied. "No one I know does that kind of work."

"But you might hear about it," he insisted. "Those people show up at conferences sometimes."

They argued for more than an hour. Now it all came back. That was the night she finally decided to take the assistant professorship back East, three thousand miles away from Greg's job at Calvac.

Greg was still confident that she would stay and take a second-rate job just to be near him. They had even talked about getting married. Sooner or later, though, Calvac would transfer him, or he would find a better job somewhere else, and they would move. He would expect her to follow him, and then she would get a third-rate job, or no job at all.

She tried to talk with him about it, but for the first time since she had known him he wasn't interested in talking. Usually they argued on any subject, cheerfully obstreperous, neither ever fully convincing the other. Sometimes they changed sides just for variety. The biological weapons issue didn't seem any more important than a dozen other verbal tussles. When they left the diner that night they dropped the subject, walked peacefully home, and went straight to bed.

Later, lying in the darkened bedroom, Anna watched the glowing tip of Greg's cigarette move in a slow arc up to his mouth and wondered. She rolled over so she could see his profile faintly outlined against the white pillows. "What we were talking about earlier," she said, "about biological weapons. Are you involved in anything like that?"

He exhaled smoke. The silence lasted just a moment too long. "Of course not."

That was when she realized she was going to take the assistant professorship.

She should have ended it entirely when she moved back East. She knew that. She'd seen Greg just enough, though, to keep her from getting interested in anybody else.

A little later she found herself standing by the window, staring through her own reflection at the ghostly branches of a tree just outside and thinking again about Y23. Greg had always enjoyed that story, the way he enjoyed any kind of trickery. He had laughed when Evans first told it, a deep, rich laugh that Anna found immensely attractive even when she didn't quite approve of the cause.

Y23, as she had been telling Carr, was a bacteriophage, a bacterial virus. Once it was in your lab, it got into all the cultures and the bacteria would lyse—get infected, break open, and produce more Y23. It was

impossible to get rid of—you might as well burn the place down and move.

Evans had taken DeWitt's insulting letter, cut it into strips, and put the strips into a culture with growing bacteria. The bacteria lysed. So Evans got the virus after all. He had been so ticked off at DeWitt that he had gone ahead and published the paper that Greg had sent her. It had not been the first paper on Y23, but it had certainly been the best.

All at once she knew she had the answer. She was still looking out the window when Carr came into the lab. He helped himself to a cup of coffee, took a seat, and sat there watching her as he sipped.

"Well?" she finally asked.

"Nothing."

"Maybe there isn't anything." She knew better, though.

"Wouldn't you rather see those viruses in our hands?" Carr asked quietly.

"Why? You'd use them, too."

"Maybe, maybe not. Maybe we'd simply release A so that everyone was immunized against B."

"You'd infect the entire world with an untested piece of DNA?"

"I don't know what we'd do, and it wouldn't be my job to decide. But I can guarantee that Allah's Vengeance *will* use those viruses when they get them." Carr looked straight into her eyes. "Remember, I found you, and they can find you."

Anna rubbed a hand across her forehead, pushing her hair back. It was just possible that Carr and his lot would simply suppress the viruses. Perhaps the work had only just started, and if they got there in time it would never go forward at all. Was that the choice, then? A choice between certain use by someone else and possible use by her own government? But Greg had already made the choice, for both himself and her. She stared at the floor.

"I don't know exactly why Thurston sent you that package," Carr said. "But I'm pretty sure you do."

Anna stared at him for a long moment. Finally she nodded.

It took the better part of Saturday and Sunday, but Anna knew from the beginning that she was on the right track. She'd dropped a snippet from the paper Greg had sent into a culture of growing bacteria—and the bacteria lysed.

Carr slept on the sofa in Anna's office and kept her supplied with sandwiches and coffee. She didn't want him around, but he insisted, and at least he had enough sense to keep out of the way while she worked.

The virus was not merely an airborne bacteriophage like Y23, it *was* Y23—except that it had a small piece of extra DNA inserted between

two of its normal genes. That small piece of extra DNA was Greg's message.

Early Monday morning, Anna finished the sequencing. Then she re-wrote the sequence in terms of RNA and reached for the genetic code chart.

A little later she walked back into her office. Carr, lying on the sofa, sat up instantly. "Have you got it?"

"Yes." She sat down beside Carr so they could both look at the sheaf of papers in her hand.

Carr stared at the string of letters on the first page with a puzzled frown. "Are you sure this is what we're looking for?"

She nodded. "There are only four nucleotide bases, and they code for twenty different amino acids. Three bases—a triplet—code for a single amino acid. There's some redundancy, of course, and punctuation."

She turned to the next page. "I started with the punctuation and substituted slashes and spaces for the triplets that mean 'start the protein here' and 'stop.' That gave me this." She pointed.

UGU/CAU/GCU/UUU/UUA/UUU/UCU UUA AUG/AUC/UGU
/CAC/UUU/UUA

"First name, middle initial, last name," Carr whispered.

Anna nodded again. "Then, I looked up each of the triplets in the code table and substituted the name of the amino acid it codes for." She pointed to the next line.

"Cysteine/histidine/alanine/phenylalanine/leucine/phenylalanine/serine," she said. "Leucine for the initial. Then methionine/ isoleucine/ cysteine/ histidine/phenylalanine/leucine." She glanced at Carr. "The simplest thing would be the first letter of each amino acid." She turned to the final page. Chapl's L. Michl.

"He's using 'p' for the letters he doesn't have," Anna said. She indicated the last line. Cha-l-s L. Mich-l. "Charles L. Michel," she added softly.

"You know him?"

She sighed. "I've seen the name. He works for a French drug company." She went over to her desk and sat down.

"We shouldn't have any trouble locating him, then." Carr gathered up the papers they had used and slipped them into his briefcase.

"Yesterday I arranged for a couple of men to keep an eye on you. Just a precaution until we pick up this Michel and make sure Allah's Vengeance knows we've got him. So don't worry if you think you're being followed."

Anna wasn't listening. She slumped in her chair, her face buried in her hands. Carr touched her shoulder.

"You okay?"

She shuddered. "I'm all right."

"You sure?" Carr bent over to look at her face. "It's almost dawn. Can I give you a lift home or anything? You must be wiped out."

"I'm all right," she repeated.

Carr left, closing the door softly behind him.

Anna went to the window and stood staring down at the quad and its litter of fallen leaves. Everything was shrouded in mist. Carr appeared on the sidewalk below. She watched him as though she had never seen him before, as though he were a stranger striding away into the grayness and vanishing among the trees.

Dawn brightened into day. Students began to appear, just a few at first, then more and more. Soon they were everywhere, waving and calling to each other as they hurried to their classes. A stream of people poured along the sidewalk and into the lab building.

The hallway echoed with the noise of banging doors and clumping feet. A group passed the office door. Someone said something. Someone laughed.

Anna closed her eyes. Suddenly the tears she had held back for so long were streaming down her face.

When no more tears would come, she locked the door, sat down at her desk, and wiped her eyes. Then she took off her shoe and removed a scrap of paper—a copy of the code sequence Greg had sent her—a somewhat longer sequence than the one she had given Carr.

She reached for the code chart and began to decipher the sequence beyond the section that represented Michel's name.

hpalth spa thiptp pivp thiptppp siptp

Health spa, and four more words. It would be a locker number and a combination. Locker number thirty. Combination five-thirteen-sixty.

Anna smiled. Greg had not merely found out the name of the man who made the viruses. He had stolen them.

The spa would be the one closest to Michel's lab. Greg would have unloaded the viruses immediately, then written the message to her in such a way that she would decipher it only if he died. She was his insurance.

She looked at her hands, hands that now controlled so much. Greg had tried to choose for her again.

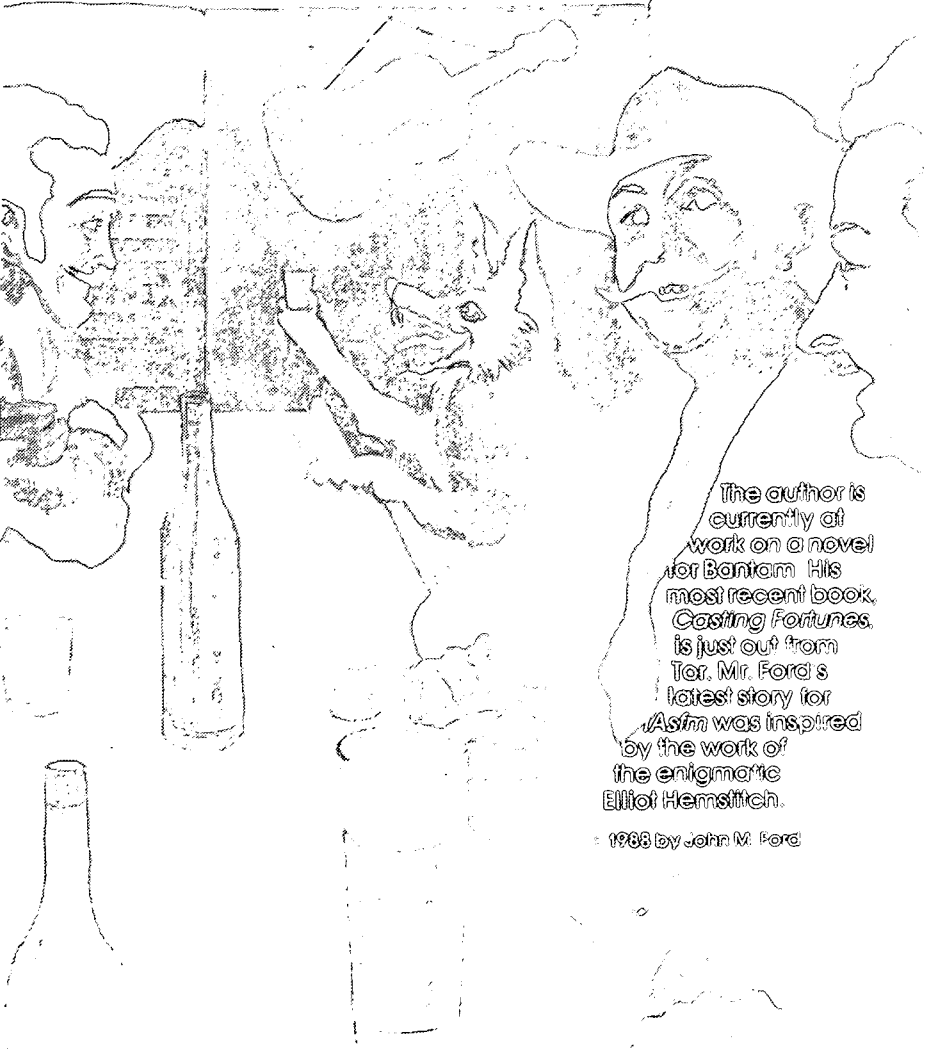
But she would make her *own* choices. ●

MOVING? If you want your subscription to *IASfm* to keep up with you, send both your old address and your new one (and the ZIP codes for both, please!) to our subscription department: Box 7058, Red Oak, Iowa 51566.

THE HEMSTICH NOTEBOOKS

by John M. Ford

art: Robert Shore



The author is currently at work on a novel for Bantam. His most recent book, *Casting Fortunes*, is just out from Tor. Mr. Ford's latest story for *Asim* was inspired by the work of the enigmatic Elliot Hemstich.

© 1988 by John M. Ford

Elliot Hemstitch (1896?-1954!?) occupies a place in the literary firmament somewhere between the discount gun shop and the all-night liquor store. An unshakeable believer in the principle that there are certain things a man is required to do, and after doing them throw up, he distilled the products of his experience, particularly his experience of the products of distilleries, into a series of writings that will endure forever, not least because they are not very long, use no big words, and contain a great deal of sex and shooting things.

Until recently, it was believed that all of Hemstitch's work was in print and earning someone money. (The exception, of course, is Hemstitch's unpublished first novel, the manuscript having disappeared when, during a long sea voyage, Hemstitch ate it.) This changed when the present author moved into an apartment formerly rented by screenwriter Patrick Hobby. While attempting to place cartons of rat poison, cartons containing a number of Hemstitch's unpublished notes were discovered. The find led to considerable excitement in the present author's circle, especially among his creditors. These are definitely genuine material, written with the authentic blue crayon in original Little Engine That Could and Cuddly Bear notebooks. The present author emphasizes again that the work is by Hemstitch himself, and anyone who says differently should be very careful starting his car.

The present author has plans to return to the closet corner in search of further literary material, perhaps Hitler's photo album or something negotiable with Howard Hughes's name on it. But that is a subject for another time and another book contract. Now, we are pleased to present the following excerpts from the work of a man who shot straight at life and rarely missed, especially at very close range.

For Whom the Bird Beeps

The furry one came into the cantina. He did not walk as a coyote should, he flowed like brown fuzzy water along the floor to the bar and held up a finger, and though he did not speak the owner poured him a drink and he drank it. It poured over his teeth and around his tongue and down his gullet and past his duodenum and into his flat coyote belly, and then he filled out and stood up straight like a man coyote does, and his eyes had the light of those who have had the very big rock fall on them, or been blown up by the Acme dynamite, or have fallen off the high cliff and hit the telegraph wires and bounced up again. When a man coyote knows these things they do not go away from him. The coyote walked out of the cantina, straight with the tire marks down his back like sergeant's stripes.

The cantina owner came over to me and put the bottle of Acme mezcal with the Acme worm in the bottom between us. "Always he comes here," said the owner, "and always he goes out again to chase the fast bird of the road. But never does he catch the bird. It is sad."

"It would be sad for the bird if he were caught," I said, and the owner smiled at me as those who understand these things smile at those who do not understand these things, and he said, "You do not understand these things. Always does the furry one chase the small fast one across the desert and the balancing rocks and the very deep canyons and the atomic test sites. Many things does he send away for from the Acme company, so that if not for him the Acme company would fail, and the Acme company people would have to take jobs in television, and would this be a good thing?"

"No," I said.

"No," said the owner. "It is what we call *queserasera*, the Doris Day thing."

"Fate," I said.

"No, that is a magazine," said the cantina owner. "You are a stupid *gringo*, but I like you. You can drink the Acme mezcal so that it goes between your teeth and past your uvula and down your esophageal tract and not get the worm stuck in your mustache. It is good that a man should do these things."

I wanted to ask him some more about the furry one, but then the cantina doors swung wide, and an old one came in, and a young one, and a not so old one in a vest, and an extremely furry one, and they began to talk of the ships that go faster than light, and I turned away, for I do not like fast ships, especially after a lot of mezcal with the worm in the bottle.

Outside, the big Acme truck was delivering packages. There was an Acme rocket sled and an Acme cruise missile and an Acme compact-disc player with wireless remote, and that was all I needed to know.

The Banana Also Rises

One of the young people who tells me they will overthrow the Republic or die stands in a small clearing, looking through binoculars. He wears a polyester jacket of a blue not found in nature, bell-bottomed trousers, white shoes and a matching belt. He is smiling, perhaps not knowing he does, showing teeth that are neither white nor even.

We are deep in the Republic's wilderness, a long way from its cantinas and its big malls. It is almost dawn. The young ones ask me not to describe the place too well. It is hard to hide when one wears Hawaiian

shirts and Mondrian dresses with crude imitations of the Yves Saint Laurent label sewn in crookedly. But it is how they will dress. It is what they are.

"There," says the young man in the blue jacket, and hands me the binoculars. They are not good glasses. They are of plastic, and say "Souvenir of Rock City" on the side. I squint through them, and see a line of the Republic's loyalists. All wear khaki bush jackets and baggy cotton trousers. All have epaulets with leather straps hooked through them, supporting small leather cases in odd shapes. One I know is a musette bag from the Army of Schleswig-Holstein.

The binoculars start to hurt my eyes. As I hand them back, a lens falls out.

"Our foreign aid," the young man says bitterly.

"That is not how they see it," I say. "They say you have the backing of the big stores. That you are the puppets of the warehouse discounters, and want only to plant their flags in the Republic's outlets."

The young one spits on a gila monster. "That is how all you people see the world. It is always your stores and the other stores. But I tell you we will have stores of our own one day. They may not be big stores, but the prices will be fair."

"And will they take the credit cards?" I say.

The young one frowns. "When the people are ready for the credit cards," he says, and turns away, so I can see the label on his jeans. It says CALVIN KOOLIDGE. I say nothing.

At the back of the line there is an American. He tells me to call him Brad, though the pink bowling shirt he wears says "Louie" on the pocket. He has the look of a man who has eaten radicchio and sashimi but now eats macaroni and cheese and canned tamales, which is a look that stays with a man, from somewhere a little north of his stomach.

I ask him why he is here.

"I couldn't look in the mirror any longer," he says. "Not without seeing the wrinkles. In my sleeves, my back, my knees—oh, God, the wrinkles."

I ask him the same thing again. I have been here long enough to know that it is never the wrinkles. The ones like Brad have other ones to do their ironing.

"All right," he says. "It was Meryl Streep. But I don't blame her."

I have heard this many times too, but I believe it. For so many of them it was Meryl Streep, playing Isak Dinesen in the big film that sold many tickets. But they never blame her.

When the sun comes up there is a battle. There is no way to tell about a battle. You either know of it or you do not, and if you do not there are no words for the noise and confusion and horror that will make you know, no words that are worth the rates this magazine pays to go and get them.

Maybe in the book to come later, the big book with the hard covers, it will be different.

But I do have a minimum contract length, so I will tell you this: when it was over, there was much cotton on the field, getting rotten so that you could not pick very much of it. There was much polyester as well, still pressed neatly. I thought of the gingham dog and the calico cat.

The young man in the blue jacket was lying still, with one of the women in a silver Lurex jumpsuit kneeling beside him. "Is it all right?" the young man said, and the woman said, "Yes, it is fine," though when one hundred percent polyester begins to smell like that, all the fabric softener in the world is no use.

In the camp of the rebels, they are drinking generic beer and eating sandwiches on white bread filled with the pasteurized food product of the cheese. The American has connected a guitar to the portable generator and is singing "Cielito Lindo" and the theme from *The Patty Duke Show*.

One of the rebels pulls my sleeve, a very young one in pajamas with a picture of a Japanese robot that sometimes becomes a Buick Electra. "Are you going back to America soon?" he says.

"Yes," I say, "soon."

"Tell them we know they love us, no matter what the media says," the very young one says. He is so small to know words like "media," I have no heart to point out that it is a plural noun. "I know they love us in America. I have a picture of the President's wife." He shows me the picture, which is autographed, and I nod and agree with him that it is very fine. There is no way that I can tell him that the woman in the picture is Fawn Hall.

Glitz in the Afternoon

The mall is a cold place in the middle of the day. Those who have gone into the mall are all in the restaurants eating the burgers and the drinks that fizz, and the wide corridors are empty and the air conditioning makes them very cold then. The people in the stores are cold too, because they all wish they were doing the lunch-break thing. It is then that a man knows whether he has come to the mall to do the hanging-out, or the shopping.

Even at the cold hour there are many people in the mall. There are the women, and the children, and the skateboard ones, and the old ones with their cheap wine in the bags of paper. The elevator music is very loud and the restrooms are for those with steel in their hearts. It is much like the bazaars of the east except that the children are not for sale.

There are other men there, but there are never many. Most look

straight ahead, thinking only of the thing they have come to buy, and plan a route that leads them on a true line from the trackless seas where their cars are parked to the store where they must buy the thing. Their eyes may be drawn aside by the stores that sell the good lingerie, or by the young ones who wear the high-heeled shoes, as in the videos of the heavy metal, but they do not stop. They order the good lingerie by mail, which a man may have many reasons to do, and they know well about the charge of the messing around with the a little bit too young ones in the spike heels. They go only to the store where the thing they want is, and they buy it and go away.

That is good and clean and honest. But it is not shopping.

To shop is to go into the mall alone, carrying only the card and a little cash for food from the places that will not accept the card. A man does not know what he will shop for before he sees it, but when he sees it he will know. It may be in a window or on a table or behind a glass case, but it will call to him. Maybe he has seen it before, in the possession of another at a restaurant where the tablecloth tastes better than the food does, or in the magazine with the pages that fold out of the middle, the pages that fold out suddenly when you are trying to buy it and stick it inside a copy of the *National Review*. The thing he shops for will smell good and it will please the eye and it will probably be matte black. It will cost like a bastard. Men know this. It is why so few men shop well.

I went through the mall, watching the young ones play the games of video and shoplifting and the sales ones chasing them and the display ones setting up the Christmas decorations, for it would be October soon. There was a strong smell of bayberry, and the sharp cry that the Styrofoam makes when it is wounded. I went back and forth, past the cards and the cheese and the Benetton of many colors and the good lingerie. I went many times past the good lingerie.

I knew the thing before I saw it. I turned, already reaching for my card, and there it was, just between the two pillars that make the terrible noise when the sales one forgets to remove the tag. I have seen pillars like that in Egypt. I do not know if their sales ones ever forgot to remove the tag, but the Pharaohs were hard men and it must have been very bad when they forgot.

I went in. The sales one, who was a young one, said "May I help you?" but she had the look that said she knew she could not help me and the clothes that asked to be helped with and the body that said if I offered to help her with the clothes she would hit me hard in the places that when they are broken do not get strong again soon.

I moved around the store. You must stalk the thing even though you know it is there. There is a chance that another man, one of those who already knows what he wants, will come in and make the buy before you,

and when this happens you must let him do it. This is the difference between those who shop and those who only buy. If you then go back into the parking lot before him and do the small wrench thing to the brakes of his BMW, this is all right, too.

No one came in. I took the thing, took it to the counter and laid it down. It looked helpless there, as the animal that shows its throat, but men who shop know this is a lie. The truth about the thing only comes when you have thrown away the store receipt and cannot return it anymore.

"Will that be cash or charge?" the sales one said. I did not speak, but took out my card of platinum and put it on the counter. The sales one shoved it into the machine, and then began what the true shoppers call the moment of truth. Either the machine will make the good beep that means your purchase is approved, or the bad beep that means you have shopped more than a man may shop. Some cannot stand the pressure, and take back the card and throw down the money that folds. In the great stores of the Champs Elysees they call it *le card cafard*, and it is a worse thing than to wear *les souliers bruns* with *le smoking*.

The machine made the good beep. The sales one put the bought thing in a shopping bag, a big one with the name of the store on the outside, so that all the other men in the mall would know that I had made my buy.

It was nearly sunset before I found my car in the big lot. It was not always so, when a man would drive all day in a car with the big fins and the name of a jungle animal. Now the cars have no fins and names like the old ones give to poodles.

When it was all over and I was home again, I sat before the box. The box was dark and quiet but I could see the numbers on the dial, and it was tuned to the channel of those who sell shoddy things to those who do not go into the mall.

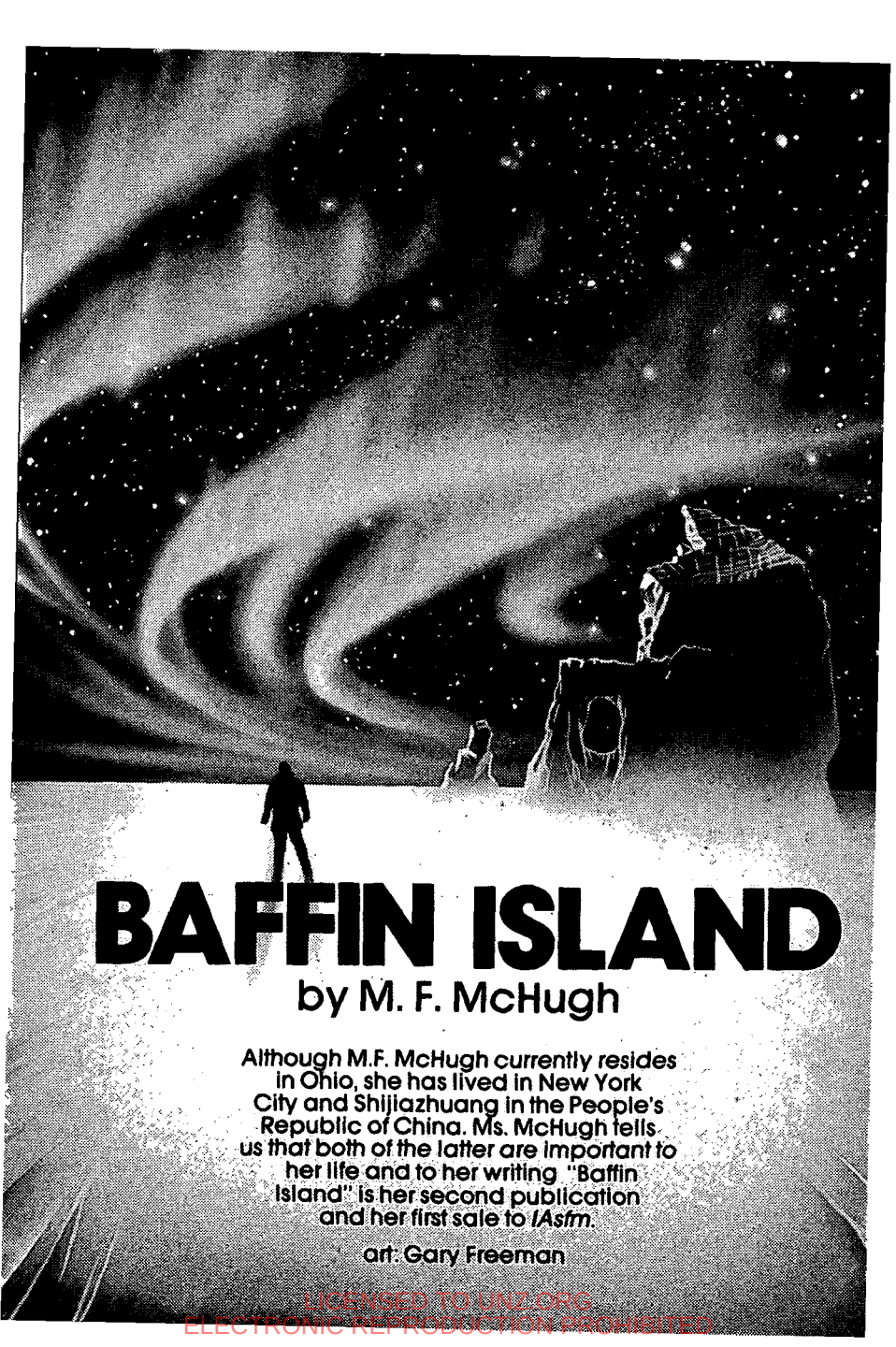
There must be many reasons why a man will not go into the mall, alone as a man should, with only his card of platinum and the sizes of his women. Yet I have seen the very old ones go in, though they could no longer see or hear because of the neon and the elevator music. And the young one who wrote funny, Jack Kerouac, would have gone into the mall, and when the blue light flashed for a special on motor oil, he would have bought motor oil.

I sat before the silent box, and cleaned the remote control. It was cool in my hand. I rested my finger on the button. ●





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



BAFFIN ISLAND

by M. F. McHugh

Although M.F. McHugh currently resides in Ohio, she has lived in New York City and Shijiazhuang in the People's Republic of China. Ms. McHugh tells us that both of the latter are important to her life and to her writing. "Baffin Island" is her second publication and her first sale to *Asfm*.

art: Gary Freeman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am unemployed.

The man who hands me the application says, "Filled out one before." It's supposed to be a question. He doesn't look up to see my answer so I don't say anything. I hope my interviewer will be *weiguoren*—not Chinese. Or if Chinese, at least *huaqiao*, like me. Perhaps an overseas person will be more sympathetic to another overseas person, unless perhaps they have to prove that they're as tough as a Chinese with citizenship. You can never tell, but I always feel Chinese are the worst.

I sit at the *káral*. Surname: Zhang. Given name: Zhong Shan. China Mountain Zhang. My foolish mother. It's so clearly a *huaqiao* name, like naming someone Nikolai Lenin Smith or Karl Marx Johnson. Zhong Shan, better known in the west as Sun Yatsen, one of the early leaders of the great revolution in China, back in the first days, the days of virtue. The man who held up the sky, like a mountain. Irony.

But better than Rafael Luis, which is my other name. Bless my parents that they paid the gene splicers so I would look Chinese, like my father.

I give my address, really Peter's address out in Coney Island as I'm Without Residence. When one has no job one cannot afford the decadent luxury of paying one's landlord, and one must accept government housing or stay with friends or family. I have been staying with Peter for almost six months. Soon I'll have to apply for government housing, I can't keep living with Peter. Living in Virginia won't be so bad, it is only ninety minutes to Journal Square Station in New Jersey, lots of people do it every day. If one is unemployed, the train is free at off-peak hours.

IDEX: 415-64-4557-zs816. Trade Designation: Construction Tech. Job Index: Comex Constr., 65997. Comex Constr. wants administrative experience I don't have, but I have three years experience in construction. In school, I wanted to be an Engineering Tech and my math scores were good, but there were no openings that year. I have an Assoc. Certificate instead of the full Bach. Sci.

I should study on the side, teach myself, take the exam. I should. Maybe when I get a job, have a place of my own again, I'll study in the evening after I get home from work, spend less time going out, waste less time and money. I've said it before, every time I was without a job.

I hand my application to the man at the desk, he glances up at me, his lips move while he keys into the network and puts my application on file, then he peels the contact off his wrist. "Have a seat," he says. I sit and read my paper. The waiting room is large, large enough to be a cafeteria or something. There are a lot of people, twenty or thirty, but that's not enough for the size of the room. While I'm reading more people hand in applications, people waiting are called for interviews. I want to check the time, but why? Time doesn't matter to me, I'm unemployed.

Still, I notice it is almost an hour before I'm called. My interviewer is a woman, a *huaqiao* I am sure. She looks too New York to be from China itself.

"Zhang," she says in English, "you have insufficient administrative experience for the job you are applying for." Her hair is pulled smoothly back from her face, shining as if lacquered. It is caught with a red cord, and the short ponytail curves under like a "c".

I nod.

She looks at the screen in front of her. "You have turned down two alternative offerings."

"I had hoped to stay in New York," I say. One job was in Maryland, the other was in Arizona. If I turn down another alternative it will go on my record. Perhaps she won't have an alternative.

She says to me in Mandarin, "You are from New York?" She is clearly *huaqiao*, she has a New York accent.

"I'm from Brooklyn," I say.

"I'm from Brooklyn, too," she says. "You like Coney Island?"

"I am staying with a friend, but I like it much better than I expected," I say. "When I get a job I expect to get a place there."

"I am thinking of joining a co-op group," she says.

So nice! An interviewer has never talked to me so personally. No doubt it is because of the address, but maybe she'll give me a job. I study her. Watch her bite her bottom lip in concentration. She has lines at the corners of her eyes, but the way she frowns makes her look very young.

Finally she sighs. "*Bukeqi, tongzhi*," she says. I am sorry, citizen. "I cannot give this to someone with so little admin experience." The polite address softens the blow.

I nod. I understand. I thank her.

"Let me check new listings," she says. "Sometimes things do not get posted." She feels badly, she wants to offer me something.

It is a kindness, I should not expect anything but I cannot help hoping. She is relieved she can do something. I watch her flick through entries. She stops and I become more hopeful. She reads quickly then flicks expressionlessly forward. At each flick she shakes her head slightly. Her lips are the perfect rose of a doll's mouth. They shine like satin. She begins to flush, she is not so happy now. Something is wrong. An alternative, not a good one, I am sure. Do not offer it, I think, pretend you didn't see it.

She straightens her shoulders. "Zhang, I have a job available for someone of your experience," she says in English. She names a salary which is three times my salary at my last job. She doesn't look at me. "It is working at a research center, the salary is high because you will have

to live at the facility, but it is a six month contract with the option to extend or renew."

"Where is it?" I ask.

"Baffin Island."

Baffin Island? Where the hell is Baffin Island?

"It is in the Arctic Circle," she says primly, handing me a card with the specs, but not looking at me. "You have forty-eight hours to decide on the job, should you want me to hold it for you, otherwise you risk someone taking it from you while you make up your mind."

"Don't hold it," I say.

The Arctic Circle, Arctic Circle, Arctic Circle, the train to Brooklyn rumbles. We stop at Arctic Avenue, and then I realize it is Atlantic and I get out to transfer. It is my third alternative. If no one takes it in forty-eight hours, I will have turned it down. That means I will be dropped from the category of prime candidates, I will only be offered jobs that have been available to prime applicants for fourteen days. No New York job will be available after fourteen days.

Why did she offer it? Maybe there is some rule that she had to. But who would ever know? It wasn't even posted. She knew I wanted to stay in New York. She was angry at something. She is a bitch. She has ruined my life. If only she didn't try to do me a favor. I would never have applied for so risky a position as the Comex Constr. job if they had had Arctic Circle posted for fear it would be my alternative.

I go back to Peter's. Peter is at work, he works in an office, doing paper sorting and filing for a dental clinic. I find beer in the box and sit down. Peter is supposed to get off work at 4:30, but I'm not surprised when he doesn't get home by six. At 9:30 he comes home. "Rafael?" he calls as he comes in, and the lights come up. I have been sitting in the dark.

"Hello, Peter," I say.

"What are you doing sitting in the dark?" He goes into the kitchen to put away groceries. I hear a low whistle. "Drink our dinner, did we. Good day at the employment office, no doubt."

"Celebration," I call, a little thick. "I think I have a job."

"Congratulations," he says. "In that case I don't care if you drank most of the beer." He sings something quietly as he puts things away. I hear him open a beer and he comes in to sit down. Blond Peter with his Eastern-European heritage and his easy, sleepy way. He is a good friend, bright yang to my dark yin. "Tell me the particulars," he says.

"It is a six month contract," I say, "with option to renew or extend." I name the salary. His pale eyebrows arch, he is waiting for the punchline, but I draw it out, saying it is my third alternative.

"What's the kick?" he says.

I smile. "It is on Baffin Island, somewhere up around the north pole."

"Oh shit," he says. "You didn't take it, did you?"

"Not yet," I say. "There is a chance that during," I check my watch, "the next forty-two hours, someone will snatch this wonderful chance away from me."

"You think maybe the salary will tempt someone?"

"No, do you?"

"It can't be that bad," Peter says gamely, "lots of people would be willing to do it for six months. Turn it down, you can stay here."

Good of him, the apartment is really too small for two roommates who aren't in love with each other. It is not that I don't love Peter, I love Peter more than anyone in the world, but I'm not in love with him. I was once, and he with me, but that was years ago.

"It's only six months," I say. "I'll use the extra time to study for my engineering license."

"Six months in Siberia," he says. "Six months for you to brood yourself into catatonia."

"But then I will have three alternatives when I get back. I can get a job in New York." I am being very practical. "Besides, catatonia is a symptom of bourgeois or maladaptive thinking, something swept away by the revolution."

Peter is looking at me in a way that says he is exasperated with me, that he doesn't trust me. Normally he would laugh, since we are clearly maladapted. Angry, he says, "Don't drink any more beer tonight."

"It's your beer," I say.

"That's right," he says.

And now we are both hurt and angry. He makes himself some dinner, I am too drunk to be hungry. There is not much to say. He goes into his room where he probably watches a vid, and I make my bed on the couch and go to sleep.

I don't see much of Peter the next day, which is my fault. The day after that I go back to the employment office. The Baffin Island job is still posted. I take it.

Two weeks later, the first week in October, and I am sitting in a copter. Five hours ago I was in Montreal, changing flights. Now, since I only had a fifteen minute transfer in Montreal and barely made my plane, I am torturing myself about whether my luggage was transferred. We will land in Hebron, Labrador. I have discovered that Labrador is part of the province of Newfoundland. I have already heard my first Newfie joke. In Hebron they still have the old-fashioned manhole covers that can be pried up with a crowbar, big round metal things. A Newfie is jumping up and down on the manhole cover saying, "Sixty-seven! Sixty-

seven!" every time he jumps. A man visiting on business stops to stare and the Newfie beckons him over, explains that what he is doing is a way of relieving stress. (This is told with a Newfie accent, every sentence ends with, "ay?") He tells the businessman to try. The businessman is not sure that he wants to, but slowly he is convinced to step on the manhole cover. He jumps into the air and says "Sixty-seven."

The Newfie says that he's got to put more into it (ay) really shout it out. So the businessman jumps and shouts "Sixty-seven!" He finds it is kind of fun, so he jumps higher, shouting "Sixty-seven!" louder and louder, until he's red in the face and his long coat tails are flying. He jumps really high, shouts "Sixty-seven!" and the Newfie whisks the manhole cover off and the businessman disappears into the manhole. Then the Newfie puts the cover back on and starts jumping up and down shouting, "Sixty-eight!"

I wonder what Baffies do to American Born Chinese.

The field at Hebron, Newfoundland, is small, most of the traffic seems to be freight. It doesn't have the usual amenities of public fields, there's no arcade of shops, and no vendors wandering around hawking things. It just slowly stops being an airfield and becomes a town. The town is all ancient prefabricated housing (the kind shipped on trucks and fitted together) but the units have been painted and added onto, sometimes fantastically ornamented in vividly tinted aqua and red aluminum and plastics. It is terribly tacky and antique looking, but very very real. I think I like it. There is one little restaurant. Once I have convinced myself that my luggage has transferred, I go into the little restaurant. It is run by Thais, which surprises me, although I guess there are Thai restaurants everywhere. I order Thai-Moo Shu, and it comes, pork and cabbage in a spicy coconut sauce, wrapped up in a pancake. The restaurant has a screen door that leads to what looks like a mechanic's yard where a gray and white dog with pale eyes is tied to a doghouse made out of blue tinted chrome/aluminum, but the Thai food tastes exactly like it would at any little Thai hole-in-the-wall back in New York. The restaurant is filled with men and women in coveralls. I feel a little conspicuous, everybody knows everybody else, but the beer and the food are reassuring.

Maybe there will be a Thai restaurant on Baffin Island, too. If so, I will probably go every day for the whole six months.

My last flight is a copter, smaller than the one I came in on. There is no one on it except for myself and the pilot and co-pilot. I imagine Baffin Island will be like Hebron. I left New York at 8:00 A.M., at 7:22 P.M. we land at Borden Station, Baffin Island.

The cold hits as soon as the door is opened, blown in by a shockingly cold wind that smells like water. It is minus three Celsius, and already

it is black as midnight. There is nobody there but the crew that ties down the copter, and the bright, white outside lights illuminate the copter, it casts long insect shadows in three directions. The only building I see is the research complex, I glance around quickly, looking for the town, but it's too cold to look much. I walk across the tarmac and into the research complex with the pilot and co-pilot. "It gets dark early," I say.

The pilot says, "Sunset was at 15:10 this afternoon." Five P.M. I think, then realize I'm wrong. Three o'clock. Sunset was at three, because we are north of the fringing Arctic Circle.

Inside the station is all smooth, clean white walls and blue carpet, very institutional and not shabby at all. There are big windows looking out at the tundra on one side, and over the bluff at Lancaster Sound on the other. The shore ice is whiter than the finest of sand beaches and the open water is shining like black glass.

For a moment I think that the woman who has met me is Chinese. "Hi, you're Zhang Zhong Shan?" she says. "I'm Maggie Smallwood, come on, I'll show you your room."

"Just Zhang," I say. She is Native American, Eskimo, I suppose. Her face is round and her eyes are slanted. She chatters as we walk, she is the one that tells me the water is Lancaster Sound. She uses words I have never heard, polayna, belukha, bowhead. I finally figure out that belukha and bowhead are kinds of whales.

"You're studying whales," I say.

She laughs, "I'm sorry, we're studying belukha migration patterns and their mating rituals." She keeps talking as she opens the door to my room. It is actually two small rooms, the front room has a desk and two chairs, the back a closet and bed. The bathroom is off the back. There's no kitchen. I was expecting an apartment, this is more like a dormitory.

"I'll bet you're hungry," she says. "I'll show you where the caf is."

The cafeteria is full of people talking, playing cards, watching vids. Very few of them seem to be eating. There is food to flash heat. Maggie tells me that during breakfast and dinner hours the food is made fresh. The cost of my dinner is debited against my wages, but it's cheap food. We sit down with a group of people, all natural behaviorists: Jim Rodriguez, bearded, with straight, pale-brown hair; Daniel Munk, blond, but not so blond as Peter, also bearded; Janna Morissey and Karin Webster (one has brown curly hair, and one has straight short hair, but I cannot remember which is which even though I can remember that the one with curly hair has a narrow face and a tough way of talking and the straight-haired one likes to dress pretty. I'm very bad with names).

"Your English is very good," Daniel says, "Aren't you hired out of New York? How long did you live in New York?"

"All my life," I say. "I'm ABC," I explain.

They don't understand.

"ABC," I say, "American Born Chinese. I'm from Brooklyn."

They laugh, they have never heard the phrase. I shake my head in wonder.

They're all Canadians. They are naïve in a nice way. There are not many Chinese in Canada because Canada has not had a socialist revolution, it's still a constitutional monarchy. This is probably a little like the U.S. used to be before the revolution. They ask me if I can speak Chinese, and how I came to be born in New York. I almost tell them only my father is Chinese, my mother is Hispanic, but I don't. I've put my Chinese name on my application; I'm not going to lose the advantage of being Chinese, not even here.

They are all very nice, tell me about the complex. I tell my Newfie joke, and everyone tells Newfie jokes.

"How far away is the town," I ask, remembering Hebron.

"What do you mean?" Janna or Karin asks (the one with straight hair).

"The town, Borden Station, how far is it?"

Jim says, "This is it. There's nothing here but the station."

They laugh at my expression.

When I wake up it is still dark. Of course, it is seven A.M., not so late, but it is as dark outside my window as if it were much earlier. I stand and look out the window, there is nothing but the Lawrence Sound, far below me. I would really like a cup of coffee, I'm not accustomed to having to get dressed before my first cup in the morning.

The room is warm, difficult to believe how cold it is outside. I keep standing there, half asleep, looking out at the landscape. There are so many stars! The sky is thick with stars, from glittering points to tiny scatterings. No moon. But the snow is bright, it must be bright enough to read a paper. Right outside my window is tough, dried grass, then the steep fall to the water. There is a band of shore ice, like a long smooth desert from here.

Looking at the shore ice, I see it is not perfectly smooth. There are shadows. I can see very far to the water. I don't know if the shadows are indentations, cracks, or frozen waves. I have no sense of proportion, how far away is the ice?

How far away is the next nearest person? How far is Hebron? Montreal? New York? If there was an emergency here that we couldn't deal with, how long until someone could get here, how long until we could get to a hospital?

There are no edges to the landscape, no tourist lodges, no sidewalks, no ships, no aerials, no wires, no planes, nothing but gradations of white

and blue to black. It has nothing to do with me. It is perfect, sterile, dead. I think I love this landscape. I know I am afraid of it.

I dress in pants and sweater and go to the cafeteria to get coffee. I will be working with Jim.

Jim is already there. He is wearing a pullover that looks like the top part of an atmosphere suit, which it is, complete with couplings. He has the hood pushed back. It makes him look like some sort of sea miner or satellite tech, not like a scientist. He's big, with an open face and a kind of easy, aw-shucks way with people that emphasizes the dumb-tech look.

"Morning, Zhang," he says. "You prefer Zhang?"

"Everybody calls me Zhang," I say.

He nods, slurping coffee. I sit down. He is eyeing me over his mug. "Nice sweater," he says, in that funny way people compliment you when they are really saying, "I don't know what to make of what you are wearing."

"Wrong, huh?" I say. It's just a sweater. It's woven in a sharkskin pattern, black, white, and gray. It's good enough to wear out drinking or something, but it's still just a sweater.

"No, I mean, I just never saw one like that. It's not really sharkskin, is it?"

Of course it looks like sharkskin. "No," I say. "Wool and synthetic." Sweaters are big at home right now. What will he say when he sees the wine sharkskin sweater with the leather ties and mirrors? Obviously he will say nothing because obviously I will never wear it here. Maybe I'll send it back to Peter and he can get some wear out of it.

The woman with the tough face and the curly hair walks in and Jim says, "Hi, Janna." I think, remember, *Janna* is the one with the curly hair, *Karin* is the feminine one.

Janna says, "Morning, Jim, Zhang, I love your sweater! Is that what they're wearing in New York?"

Ah hah. Overdressed. "Well," I say, "it was when I bought it last winter."

"Karin will want one as soon as she sees it. But you're going to freeze." Janna stops and puts her hands on her hips. "Don't you have any winter gear?"

For the first time I think I jack Janna. Janna is tough, practical, no nonsense. That's her mechanism. Maybe Janna and Karin are a couple? "This is winter gear in New York."

"Well, it's not winter gear here. You're supposed to be issued an ARC."

ARC. Artificial climate suit. What the rest of us call atmosphere suits. "I just got here," I say. "Maggie showed me my room and then the caf."

Janna looks at Jim, Jim shrugs. "He can't go out like that," Janna says.

"We'll have to find him something." Jim frowns. "He couldn't wear mine, it'd be too big, and I've got to wear it. Maybe Daniel's. Is Daniel going out?"

Nothing to do but ask Daniel. We tromp to Daniel's room, carrying our coffee mugs. Daniel is asleep, after all it is only 7:45. And dark enough to be midnight. Sunrise isn't until almost 10:00 A.M. I have that disoriented sense of being up at the wrong time.

Daniel says I can use his ARC if it fits. He hands it to me and I shuck my sweater. The air inside the station is cool but not cold. I work out, I can be casual about being bare-chested, especially next to Jim who looks big but undefined. If he worked out I could never compare with the width of his shoulders. Under his ARC what does he look like? Forget all that for six months, Zhang. It's a small place, people are in each other's laps. I am a monk in the service of research, and Jim is not my type anyway. I tug the ARC over my head, pull the hood off my hair. It is not a good fit, but it will do. It's too warm.

Jim nods. "Better."

Janna nods, too.

Daniel says, "Wear it in good health." He hands me the leggings and shuffles back to bed.

I look at Janna and Jim. "I think I'd prefer to put these on in my room."

Jim grins. "Yeah, probably."

I dress, feeling like I'm playacting, and meet Jim at the caf. We walk down to the pool. Not a water pool, a vehicle pool. There's a cutter unit that looks like it's barely been used, it's not even dirty. I check it to make sure the seals have been broken, but actually it has been used before, so I load it in the back of the yellow floater. Then we load a couple of crates of pre-fab and I climb in the floater with Jim.

"Have you ever been under the ice?" he says.

Sure, I think to myself, I spend all my time under ice, usually up around Macy's. What the hell does he think? New York is a glacier? I don't know what he means by "under the ice." I don't understand these people when they talk. "I just got here," I say.

"It's not so bad," he says.

Something never to believe, right up there with "It tastes just like chicken," is "It's not so bad." If it wasn't bad, they wouldn't have to tell me it wasn't bad.

We rumble out into the darkness and I can feel the force of the wind hit me and the floater, when Jim sets the hover he has to head the nose into the wind, but in my suit I'm not cold. If anything I'm a little warm. It's pretty. The sky is black, the land is white. It's so big and empty that it's scary. I wonder if I'm agoraphobic. Of course, I'm a city boy. It's not the space that makes me nervous, it's the absence of human reference.

We head off, the nose of the floater about forty-five degrees to the left of the direction in which we are actually heading, so we are kind of skidding sideways. I glance back at the station, expecting reassurance, but we scoot over the lip of the big hill down to Lancaster Strait and the station looks smaller and smaller. So I look forward again, which is slightly less unnerving than watching safety recede.

Jim tells me about where we are going. We're heading for Halsey Station, which, when it is finished, will be the first of a series of stations that will monitor belukha whales. It's under water in the summer, under the ice in the winter. "Why did you take this job, the chance to study in China?" he says.

"Nobody said anything to me about studying in China," I say.

"That's what the guy before you was out here for," he says. "He said your government wrote it into a hazardous contract, if you renew your contract you get some kind of chance to study in China."

I didn't really read the contract. All right, so you should always read a contract. "I'll have to look," I say. I don't believe it. They wouldn't give somebody a chance to study in China just for spending six months here.

"So why did you come? You don't seem very interested in the great outdoors."

I wonder what I seem like to him. He's a scientist, here because he wants to be, he must get pretty tired of techies who want to do their six months and go home. "It was my third alternate," I say. "I had to take it."

"You mean your government made you come here?"

"Not exactly." I explain about alternatives.

"Were you at all, you know, interested?" he asks. "I mean, I know it's not New York, but like you said, it's only for six months and it's a change, you know."

"Yeah," I lie, "I thought it would be interesting. And I thought it would make me study for the engineering exam." He doesn't want to hear how horrible I think this place is, he chose to come here. And I should study for the engineering exam. There isn't much social life here.

"You should check out that education thing," he says. "Kevin only had to work a year and now he's in Guangzhou."

Stay here a year? It would be worth it if I could study in China. But I'm sure that it's more complicated than that, or that the regulations have changed. *Madre de Dios*, stay here a year?

"There's the station," Jim says. We coast out onto the ice and he points to something that looks like an old-fashioned lighthouse. The ice is run with cracks, long spiderwebs. And as we get closer to the station I can see how the ice has piled up around it. "Shit," he says, "we ought to clear that ice."

The ice has ground against the west side, mounting the side of the tower. We'd need a light-hammer. I mention that.

"There's one in the station," he says, "we have to clear ice every couple of weeks."

We park the floater on the ice and walk across to the station. Without the blow of the floater I can hear the ice groaning all around me. It groans like metal under stress, but there's *hectares* of it. Wind moan and ice groan, black sky and white blue ice in the dark. We climb slabs of ice to metal rungs set in the side of the tower, and I follow Jim up to the top where he opens a hatch and we see the lit stairs curling down at our feet. He gestures for me to go first and closes the top after us. The wind stops and I realize I've been holding my shoulders tense. They ache. The stairs are a circular metal staircase in a reinforced concrete tower with a ribbon light down the wall, but ugly as it is in here it's better than out there.

Our steps echo as we go down. Underneath is a large space, maybe twenty meters across, with windows for the outer walls. It's bare unfinished concrete floor and ceiling except where someone has started finishing one of the walls in porcelaine white. "The actual shell is raconite," Jim says. "We've got this level wired so the lights come on whenever anyone enters but then there are two more levels below us. The middle one isn't as finished as this one, the bottom is labs. I need some help setting up some stuff for a lab, then there's a building protocol you can use to do some work on the place while I run some tests. Ah, the hammer is under the stairs, there's only one." He's embarrassed that there's only one, he doesn't want to tell me to do the ice myself.

"Well," I say, "That's what they're paying my inflated salary for."

He grins, relieved. He's a nice guy, big and woolly as a bear. "It won't take you too long," he says. "Just break up the top stuff and be careful not to cut too deep, remember there's water underneath. I'll be on the first level."

"*Meishi*," I say.

"What?"

"*Meishi*, you know, 'no problem,' " I say.

"Is that Chinese?"

I guess it is, I never thought about it. Everybody says *meishi*. Except Canadians.

I hoist the hammer, brand-new, just like the cutter, but a little more used, and climb back up the steps with it. When I open the hatch the wind is still going and the ice is still groaning and creaking and my shoulders bunch up again. I close the hatch behind me and wonder if people get accustomed to this. Man is an adaptable animal, I tell myself, you'll get accustomed to this. I sling the hammer across my back with

the shoulder strap and climb down. How am I supposed to use a hammer on a substance I have difficulty standing on? Cleats would help. Remember when back at the base to ask someone about ordering some kind of mountain-climbing boots. I wrap the contact round my wrist and jack into the hammer. Ice is freaky stuff, it's not like concrete because it's got a weird surface and the density is different. It's hard to judge how much headway I'm making, first I think I've done a lot and then when I look I haven't done anything. Then I really whale and suddenly I've cut the surface too deep and the hammer is skipping all over the place.

Someone who knows what they're doing would finish a lot faster than I do, but in an hour I've cut away a lot of ice. I don't know how close I am to water and that makes me nervous, there are all these cracks on the ice and I'm not sure it's safe, don't people get killed out here? I walk away from the tower out on the groaning ice—I almost think I can feel it move—to the floater and pull the cutter out of the back. I walk farther out, about thirty meters away from the tower and jack into the cutter. I focus the beam as tight as it will go and aim straight down and in no time I've cut a hole straight through the ice to water. One meter before I register a change in density. The ice is about a meter thick. Well, a meter of ice isn't likely to dump me into Lancaster Sound. But if it stress fractures it would shatter spectacularly and I'd hate to be there when it happened.

When we get back to the base I'm going to do some reading about ice.

In the evenings I study engineering, and a letter to the Bureau of Education brings back the information that workers under thirty-five years of age who take hardship jobs for one or more years get preferential treatment when applying for school in China and qualify for loans to help with their education, if needed.

To go to school in China. Chinese citizens can take the entrance exams, and 10 percent of the seats are open to overseas Chinese and foreigners by competitive exam. If I could get a B.A. Engineering in China I'd be set. I'd be able to get good work anywhere, in New York, maybe even in China. I could probably get a job and stay in it, I'd be assigned good housing, maybe after a couple of years I could live in Manhattan. Talk about luck, like winning the numbers. I begin to request math texts from the library so I can prep for the entrance exam.

Most days I spend at Halsey Station doing construction while everyone else checks recordings and makes observations. Maggie Smallwood tells me everything is going to happen in the spring, when the belukha and the bowhead mate. She says the Sound is just constant activity then. Even now the lights attract plankton and the plankton attract all sorts of fish. Everyone is nice, everyone is friendly, but distant. They're sci-

entists, they have a mission. I'm a six month techie, and although no one would say it, working class. Muscle rather than brain.

Still I hang around sometimes with a cup of coffee and listen to them talk about what they are doing. When Janna needs someone to label bottles I'm happy to oblige. When Jim's atmosphere suit—excuse me, his ARC—seems to have mic problems, I find the fault in the receiver and use one of the lab's microtools to repair it. Daniel can never keep all of the tools he needs at hand, so I hang a toolholder over his lab table, like chefs use to hang pots and pans in a kitchen where they'll always be in reach. I hang a rack over Karin's and rig it so she can raise and lower it so her samples will be out of her way when she needs the workspace. Soon they're asking me to do little things for them and I'm busy all the time.

Then we go back to the base in the dark, and the evening is dark, and we wake up in the morning and it's dark, and since we spend most days under the ice at Halsey the only sunlight I see is the blue glow filtered through a meter of ice. Every couple of weeks I have to hammer the ice free of the tower and usually replace ladder rungs where it's torn them away—I never do get my mountain boots—and although I can't get used to the groan of the ice I look forward to it because I do it at noon, when the sun is above the horizon and the ice is blinding white and I feel surrounded by light. If it's after ten and someone mentions they left something on the floater I'm the first to volunteer to get it.

"Do you miss the sun?" I ask Maggie Smallwood. Maggie looks Chinese to me, but she doesn't act Chinese. She acts Canadian.

She thinks a moment, looking at the black windows. "Yeah, some. But after summer it's nice to have some darkness."

Summer. In July the sun never sets. "Is it warm in the summer?" I ask.

"Sure," she says. "There's grass and flowers and baby caribou. You'll see it. Wait, you won't, will you, you'll be gone in April."

"I don't know," I say, "I have to find out about this school thing in China."

"Great," she says abstractedly, then, "look at that seal!"

Outside the window a seal is coasting past, gray and sleek with a neat head like a cat's, looking in at the lights with its great, almond eyes. Maggie turns to me, beaming from her round Eskimo face, "Isn't he wonderful?"

I've never seen a live seal before. "Yeah," I say, and then without thinking, "Do they all look so sad?"

She looks at me oddly but doesn't answer.

Early in November we stand on the ice at 11:54 and watch the sunrise with the rest of Borden Station. The edge of the sun's disk flashes above

the horizon for less than a minute and then sets. I watch the red sky darken. Tomorrow the sky will redden as if the sun will rise but then darken. This is the evening of a long night. Dawn is in February. The Arctic landscape is beautiful at night.

It just isn't meant for human beings.

Maggie's people have lived here for generations. She says I shouldn't worry about the darkness, but suggests full spectrum light therapy, so once a week I go to the clinic and get thirty minutes of full spectrum light. I feel foolish lying underneath the lights like a sunbather but the doctor explains to me how some people are more sensitive to light changes than others. "Do you experience bouts of depression in January?" she asks.

According to Peter I experience bouts of depression if I miss a subway connection. "Not that I noticed," I say, "but my friends say I'm moody." I smile apologetically.

She smiles back and says, "Why did you come here?" It occurs to me that in less than two months a lot of people have asked me that question.

I study engineering texts under full spectrum lights wearing only my underwear.

I work on construction on the first level and they work in the labs on the third.

So I cope, and people are nice to me, if distant, and it's only a year. It's a great experience, back in New York I'll be able to say, "When I was in the Arctic Circle . . ." One day Jim says to me, "I've got to go out on the ice, want to come? I could use some help."

I don't particularly want to go, I don't want to stay at Halsey all day. It will be an experience. It will make the time go faster. So we load gear into the floater and take off across the ice. We'll plant some pick-ups either in open water or drive them through the ice and then we'll come back. It will only take the morning.

Morning. It's not going to be morning until February. I keep thinking of it as "dark in the morning." I find myself waiting for it to get light. The doctor prattles on about the need for something to focus on, a goal. It seems that the reason the scientists are less likely to have problems with depression is because they have an obsession and that orders their *Umwelt*, their self-world. We live in the same physical space but our feelings about it make us order it differently. Maggie Smallwood told me that her ancestors used to be able to draw marvelous maps from memory but that their hunting-grounds were always drawn disproportionately large. That's because in their *Umwelt*, those were the places where their lives were lived, and everything else was thought of in relationship to them. I think if Maggie had to draw a map, the largest place on it would be the open water where her beloved whales live. Her whole life is or-

ganized around whales. Her lab is where she organizes her data on whales, so in a way, that's where the whales are. If she goes someplace else, she's away from her whales, out of her normal world. She would probably be homesick.

When I look outside the window, I don't see whales, I see dark. This place isn't even in my *Umwelt*. Skimming across the ice with Jim I look out across the empty land. It has been a full moon for six straight days. It never sets, never rises. Sometimes it's east, sometimes it's north, sometimes west. It's hard to believe we are on earth.

We go farther away from Borden Station than I have ever been. I tell myself it doesn't matter, Jim has done this before, we'll get back. I could walk back across the ice if I had to. I realize that this morning I don't care. I'm too tired of it all to care. I am along for the ride.

As we go Jim explains that the ice we are on is called "fast ice" because it is shorefast, meaning it's attached to the shore. We'll cross the lead of open water and then we'll be in "pack ice" which is ice that's floating. Ahead of us the ice changes abruptly from white to black. We come closer, the ice beneath us shading from blue white under the moon to gray. Behind us a long streak of darker gray marks where the floater has crossed, and then we cross to the black ice. Jim shouts, "The lead!" over the sound of the floater. We're over open water. Across the open water I see more ice, rough and tumbled, not like the ice we just came over. Floating free. As we cross I see that between us and those mounds is a flat skirt of ice. Big flat gray plates that have ridden up over the edges of other big flat plates so they overlap. "Nillis ice," Jim explains, "when it does that it's called 'finger-rafting.'"

Why?

Jim turns the floater west and we run along the lead for about twenty minutes. He's watching his location on the board and when it satisfies him he cuts the motors and together we manhandle one of the pickups—with their pointed noses and tailfins they look like old-fashioned missiles—and heave it over the side. It disappears into the water, heading straight down to anchor in the bottom and monitor the area for animal life. Jim jams the floater back into forward and makes a wide turn that kicks up the black water and we head back the other way, east. With the full moon hanging above us we can see quite clearly, but it's hard to tell how near or how far things are. I know we came over a kilometer across open water, but the ice shore could be just twenty meters away.

Jim cuts north towards the pack ice, but we run for over twenty minutes before we reach it, then we're on the flat sheets. The floater skims. There's no snow, this far north is a desert, it rarely snows. We ride over a lip of bluish-white ice and then it's like riding rough seas as the floater

bounces over the terrain. Jim runs fast but steers carefully, the floater could ram a spire of ice. We rise over a lip—

A stomach-lurching drop of about a meter and a half and we are in a lead. I yelp and grab and Jim looks surprised. He turns us sideways in the lead and slows down. After a moment he sees a gap in the pack and we're headed north again. This time we go a little more cautiously.

I do not say anything. Jim does not say anything.

We are on the pack ice when Jim says, "This is close enough. Cut fast, the pack is running east."

I climb out and he hands me the cutter. There's no sensation of movement, the pack feels like solid land. "How fast are we running?" I ask.

"I don't know," he says, "pack ice runs irregularly. Don't worry, the floater will keep us oriented."

I wasn't worrying, but when someone tells me not to worry, then I wonder. I want to cut a well of about a third of a meter, it will take a few minutes. I set the cutter and start working while Jim hauls the pick-up out onto the ice.

I cut through three-and-a-half meters of ice before I reach water, that's pretty far for a cutter because I can't go down with it. My arms are tired from suspending the cutter above the hole. Jim heaves the pick-up into the hole and lets go, we hear it splash below.

"One more," he says, "let's go."

I climb in after him. "Is it in open water?" I ask.

"I don't know," he says.

I can only hope.

Off across pack ice, but slowly because the leads we find close up in front of us. The wind is high and as we watch the narrow leads become gray. I have never seen water freeze as I watch. I am not cold, not in my suit, but I can feel the wind hit me.

Jim is careful, we mount ridges of ice slowly. He calls this "close pack," and watches the location on his board. It feels to me as if we are going diagonally and I ask if we are going south. He says no, that the pack veers about thirty degrees off the wind. He skips us over narrow leads, running us fast enough that we don't have time to sink before we hit the other side. Finally, near a lead, he stops.

"Not open water," I say. I don't like cutting through this.

He shakes his head. "Make it quick, we're drifting."

"Could we heave it into the lead?" I ask.

He squints, looks back down at his location on the board. "Yeah," he says, "we could."

I climb out and he passes the pick-up to me, then while I hold the nose and he holds the fins, we set out under the night sky. We have to go slowly, the footing is uneven and we have to climb over boulder-sized

chunks of ice. The edge of the lead is not even like the bank of a river. The lead is almost a meter below us and the "edge" is an irregular slope about a meter wide. The lead is gray, nillis ice that gently rises and falls. The ice looks like grease. Because I suggested using the lead rather than cutting, I go down the slope, gingerly, supporting the nose of the pick-up. I wedge my feet against pieces of ice and say, "I've got it." I take the weight of the pick-up, bent awkwardly towards Jim.

I feel as if I have over-balanced, my feet go out from under me, I hit the ice hard enough to knock the wind out of me. Then I am under water. There's no air in my mask, which has shut off to keep the water out, and the suit is not made to insulate against ice water, so I feel the cold. I surface and flail for the edge, Jim is holding onto the ice, and I keep failing to reach far enough to grab the edge.

Get out, my mind is screaming. The slush is thick and grey and it sticks in clumps to my faceplate. I am not thinking that I will get out. Always before, when something happened, I have been afraid I would be injured, that it would be a long time before things would be okay again.

I am thinking, this is serious. I am thinking, I am not going to be okay. I realize, I don't care. Startling thought, that, I don't care. The worst that can happen is dying. The cold makes it hard to move, to swim, and I have half a notion to give in, but I am not sure how. If I give in, if I stop fighting, what do I do, tread water and look at Jim? Stop treading water? I flail and fight and watch myself as if from a great distance. I am trying to get out because it is too embarrassing not to. The truth is, I am not sure how to drown.

"Zhang!" Jim keeps shouting. I finally grab something. I can't get out, can't do more than hold on. For a moment Jim doesn't move, then he scrambles down and grabs my arm. I can't get leverage to get out, he can't find enough purchase to pull me out, but he keeps pulling and sliding, and I keep reaching for something to hold onto, and finally manage to get halfway out. My body is suddenly heavy, the way it feels after being in the water, and Jim helps me get the rest of the way up.

"The lead shifted!" Jim yells, although my mike is working fine and I can hear him clearly. "Are you okay?"

"Fine," I say, still feeling as if I am watching myself. "Where's the pick-up?"

"It's in! Are you wet?"

I'm cold, and I feel coldest around the waist. "No," I say.

"Are you okay?" he says again.

"Yeah," I say, "just cold."

"We better get back to Borden," he says. We make better time going back across the ice than we did carrying the pick-up and climb into the

floater. I am curious about this not caring. I am aware that it is not a good thing, but it is a lot better than worrying.

"Damn," Jim says, "that was freaky! The lead shifted, I mean they do that, you read about it happening to Eskimo hunters, but I've never seen it happen. It just moved farther apart, like a goddamn earthquake. I saw you thrown in, just thrown in, wasn't a damn thing you could do about it, and if I hadn't grabbed that chunk of ice, I'd have gone right after you, and we'd never have gotten out!"

Jim talks except when he has to concentrate on the floater. I say, "Yeah," when I need to. I have nothing to say. The lead got wider, that's how I fell in. The lead opened up. It occurs to me it could have as easily closed.

Now that I am out of the water the suit is beginning to keep me warm again. My strange mood lifts suddenly, I am not the watcher anymore, I am Zhang, sitting in a cold ARC suit, wondering what it would have been like to have tried to come up for air and found only ice. My teeth start chattering. I realize I can't go home. I want very badly to go home.

By early December I have stopped studying. I always do. I do not like to study, I always tell myself I should, but then after a few weeks, I stop. Always before, I have slowly gone from studying five nights and going out two, to studying three nights and going out four, to not studying. Always before I have said that if I didn't have any distractions, I would study. Now there is no place to go, but I don't study. I sit at the window and look out at Lancaster Sound. Sometimes I watch the Arctic foxes, trotting along with their short legs nearly a blur of motion, and often after I see the foxes I go to the cafeteria and get a cup of coffee, sit and talk with Janna, or Karin, or Jim. But mostly the landscape is empty except for the slowly unfurling cliffs of the aurora borealis, glowing lavender and pink and pale green above the blue ice and snow. I see my own reflection in the window, so I turn off my lights and sit in the dark. I lose track of time. I discover that it's possible to listen to outside noises, and then the outside comes into my room. The wind is so constant that after a while I don't hear it anymore, and then there is nothing to hear.

I am not adapting well, I know.

Once in a while Maggie Smallwood comes to ask me to come watch a rec or a vid. "Corin is showing the rec he's put together on polar bears," she says, or, "It's a vid from the States."

So I go, and sit. If I can sit on the end I say I am tired and leave early. When Maggie traps me in the middle, then I have to stay to the end.

I am tired. All day when I am working, I want to sleep. I think about going to sleep. But as soon as I get back to my room, I am tired but not sleepy. The clinic sends me notes to come lay under the lights, but when

I lay under the lights, there is nothing to do but study, and I cannot bear to think of my engineering text, so I stop going.

In my room I think about what I am trying to do. I am twenty-seven. I am thinking of trying to pass an examination to university, so I may go to China and study engineering. Okay. Say I work very hard this winter, I study all the time, I pass the examination. Then I would go to China, where everyone wants to go. Old Mother China, where there is *possibility*. I would study for four years in China, away from New York, in a foreign place—granted I am Chinese, well I look Chinese, and I speak the language, but I have never been to China. But I do this for two years. Then I have a choice, either try to stay in China, where I can get a good job, maybe become well off. Or come back to New York, where I will be able to get a good job.

All of that work to make a little more money. But I will still be Zhang. I carry myself wherever I go, and it is myself I want to escape from. I hate myself. I hate this place. And I find it is very tiring to carry hate all the time. So I sit and listen to the night on the Arctic Tundra, defeated before I start. And sick to death of all of it.

I remember reading about the first crew at Canalli Base on Mars, how they suffered from depression. I tell myself it's only dealing with an unfamiliar environment. But mostly I sit in my room surrounded by a wind I can't even feel.

Five of us go out to Halsey in the big floater, Jim, Maggie, Janna, Eric, and me. I am almost finished with the construction on the first level, but all I can think of is the immense amount of work needed on the second level. I'll be gone before the second level is ever completed.

"Look at that ice," Eric remarks, referring to the ice piling up on the west side of Halsey Station. It is a lot of ice, but I cut Halsey free not too long ago (how long ago was it? Maybe sunset? A month?). I feel the implied criticism. "I'll take care of it," I say, and get out of the floater before anyone else. I go straight for the cutter, and wait for everyone to go downstairs, then back out of the warm light into the night. I start to work on the ice, which will come back again. And next winter, another tech will cut away the ice, and it will grow back, and eventually, when they no longer use Halsey Station, they will stop cutting away the ice, and it will erode the station away, and then there will be nothing here but the flat plane of ice, moaning with the cold.

And I am here, and it makes no difference. I have built part of this place, and someday it will be gone, so why am I here? I turn my back on Halsey Station and score wide shallow cuts in the ice. I cut Chinese characters, "*Wo zai jar*," I am here. And then I use the cutter to smooth them over until it is smooth as glass, polishing away the traces.

"Zhang?"

Maggie is standing on the tower, lit from underneath by the light. She is faceless behind her face mask, hidden in her ARC, but I know her size and shape, her voice. It infuriates me to see another faceless person in an ARC suit. The Arctic makes people things. I do not answer her, but make abrupt, choppy cuts in the ice.

"What are you doing?"

I think the wind and the stressed ice sounds are answer enough. Then I think, damn it, I want to be in the wind. So putting down the cutter I take off my mask, pull back my hood. The wind is so cold it makes my eyes tear, the air is so cold it hurts to breath, much colder even than going into the water. I open the seals, pull the top off. I don't care if I'm cold. The pain of the cold seems like the right feeling, seems real. I pick up the cutter and make a cut.

Part of me cannot believe what I am doing, but I have had enough, I want them to know I have had enough. "It's all shit!" I shout at Maggie. "This base, the polar bears and whales! None of it matters! We don't frigging well belong here! We are nothing! *Nada!*" Maybe I am posturing, but here in the wind I do not feel that. I cut through the ice, to the water underneath, a smooth shhhiffffzzz, as the laser hits water and vaporizes it. I start to cut a trench, burning along, but I cannot concentrate, so I throw down the cutter. I am talking, talking, talking, talking, but what I am saying does not seem important. Some of it is English, some of it is Spanish, my mother's language. I am talking to Maggie. I am talking to myself.

I am talking to the ice, and I am saying over and over, "I have lost my frigging mind, do you understand? I have *lost* my frigging mind. I have lost my *frigging* mind."

Maggie comes over and takes my arm and says, "Come inside. Come inside."

At first I think, no. But then I realize I am cold, and that I really want to, so I let her pick up my pull-over and the cutter and we go inside. Now she talks and I am quiet. "It's nothing," she says, "it happens in the winter. Come inside, have something hot, have some tea. The Eskimo call it *perlerorneq*, winter depression, it happens when it gets dark and you're unhappy, but now it's over, you're okay, you'll be okay. I'll make you a cup of tea, very sweet, here, put this back on and get warm." To Jim and Janna, "Zhang is tired, I'll take him back, he's not going to work today. Don't worry, he's okay now."

Words wash over me, I don't care. I don't care, except I am so tired that I could weep. I wonder if I am going crazy, but I think that if I am, at least I will go home.

Maggie takes me back, and takes me to my room. She sits with me on

my bed and tells me, "Right now, you are just sick of life, *perlerorneq*, but you'll feel better."

"I'm sorry," I mumble. But I have a feeling now, not anger. Underneath my tiredness I feel grateful. "Thank you," I say.

"Go to sleep," she says.

I sleep for sixteen hours, through the day and the next night. And when I meet everyone the next morning for breakfast, I am embarrassed, and they are all kind. I cannot look at Maggie Smallwood, so I don't.

Janna says, "It's hard for all of us, but for you, well, you didn't even want to be here."

"I don't know what happened to me," I say, penitent and confused. I go to work, and they keep me working on the third level, close to them, and they talk to me often.

Maggie talks to me, matter-of-fact. "When they had trouble with depression in space, they asked the Inuit Eskimo and the Greenland Eskimo about *perlerorneq*. It's like a circuit breaker. Now the Eskimos train research crews in space in ways to deal with it. I learned about it in school, in my Native Studies course."

My unhappiness is still there, but it is gray, not black. I go back to the full spectrum lights, I study a little. Janna begins to teach me calculus on Monday and Wednesday nights, to keep me studying. I have taken calculus, and she is good at explaining, so it is easy. I do not talk much to Maggie, except to say hello. I am ashamed of my behavior towards her, but what is there to say?

So December passes. Christmas, a package from Peter, sweaters in the most outrageous styles, with little capes; all the rage, he writes. I give one to Karin. We exchange gifts, sing songs. It's not so bad.

We are expecting sunrise at 12:14 P.M. on February 2. In January I study and wait through the days. I have the feeling that I have felt the worst and now it will be all right. I decide to renew my contract.

"Don't worry," Janna tells me, "You'll love the summer, a sun worshiper like you. Explorers used to wear felt blindfolds so they could escape the sunlight to sleep."

On January 29 we are studying in the late morning. Eric is running an experiment at Halsey from eight P.M. until almost three A.M. and he needs a tech, so I won't go out to Halsey until later. Each day now there is a false dawn. The sky gets rosy and the sun threatens to rise, the stars paling in the south, but it doesn't quite come up. Still, I watch. Only four more days.

Janna is checking my figures, I am watching the horizon. Dawn seems so close, so possible. The sky is the pearlescent white of dawn, shading

to pink, lavender, indigo, and then somewhere above, to black. The ice is the color of the sky.

And then, four days early, I see the edge of the sun, blinding, above the horizon. "Janna!"

She looks up and her eyes widen and then crinkle with delight. "Oh, Zhang, wonderful."

It's morning. I smile and smile.

"It's not a real sunrise," Janna explains, "It's refraction. The earth's atmosphere bending light rays. The sun is still five degrees below the horizon."

We sit in silence and watch the sun rise and then dip. In minutes it is over.

I expect to feel the weight of the night again, but no, the sunrise is enough. I can wait. I can study, I can pass the exam. And the second night is not so bad, never as bad as the first.

I have survived. And I think, finally, I am adapting. ●

NEAT STUFF

(Continued from page 39)

Museum owes much to James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and German Expressionism, his work became synonymous with the fast-paced Warner Brothers' films. The volatile Hungarian went on to direct *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Captain Blood*, *The Sea Hawk*, *Casablanca*, and, rather incongruously, *White Christmas*.

The early Technicolor process is also fun to watch, rendering everything in pale greens and magentas, as if the film had been hand-tinted. Colorization foes would be advised to take a look at this early attempt to create a color film. (And with Ted Turner about to unleash the classic *King Kong* in color—gasp—it may be a good time to remind everyone that colorization can be removed from your television set by simply turning the color off. It's less deleterious than panning, scan-

ning, time compression, and a whole host of techniques commonly used for televised films that dramatically affect a film.)

The lure of the wax museum remains strong. A recent film, *Waxworks* (Vestron Video, P.O. Box 10382, Stamford, CT 06901), written and directed by Anthony Hickox and named the best horror film of the year by the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror, is a pleasant break from the endless cycle of mindless horror films featuring nubile beings pursued by maniacs. In this movie another demented wax sculptor has created a museum of living tableaux. His exhibits come to life when you enter them. So a hapless group of teenagers gets to face horrors ranging from the werewolf to the Marquis de Sade. It's graphic, sensual horror, and more fun than any other contemporary horror film I've seen in the past year. ●

© 1989 by Orson Scott Card

PAGEANT WAGON

by Orson Scott Card

art: Laura Lakey

In our February 1986 issue, we published "Salvage," Orson Scott Card's stunning tale of a young man growing up in Utah after the collapse of the United States. Several years have since passed in the finely crafted and independent tale that follows, but the story of the people who must create a new life for themselves in this fascinating depiction of the future remains a compelling one.



LICENSED TO UNEP
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Deaver's horse took sick and died right under him. He was setting on her back, writing down notes about how deep the erosion was eating back into the new grassland, when all of a sudden old Bette shuddered and coughed and broke to her knees. Deaver slid right off her, of course, and unsaddled her, but after that all he could do was pat her and talk to her and hold her head in his lap as she laid there dying.

If I was an outrider it wouldn't be like this, thought Deaver. Royal's Riders go two by two out there on the eastern prairie, never alone like us range riders here in the old southern Utah desert. Outriders got the best horses in Deseret, too, never an old nag like Bette having to work out her last breath riding the grass edge. And the outriders got guns, so they wouldn't have to sit and watch a horse die, they could say farewell with a hot sweet bullet like a last ball of sugar.

Didn't do no good thinking about the outriders, though. Deaver'd been four years on the waiting list, just for the right to apply. Most range riders were on that list, aching for a chance to do something important and dangerous—bringing refugees in from the prairie, fighting mobbers, disarming missiles. Royal's Riders were all heroes, it went with the job, whenever they come back from a mission they got their picture in the papers, a big write-up. Range riders just got lonely and shaggy and smelly. No wonder they all dreamed of riding with Royal Aal. With so many others on the list, Deaver figured he'd probably be too old and they'd take his name off before he ever got to the top. They wouldn't take applications from anybody over thirty, so he only had about a year and a half left. He'd end up doing what he was doing now, riding the edge of the grassland, checking out erosion patterns and bringing in stray cattle till he dropped out of the saddle and then it'd be his horse's turn to stand there and watch *him* die.

Bette twitched a leg and snorted. Her eye was darting every which way, panicky, and then it stopped moving at all. After a while a fly landed on it. Deaver eased himself out from under her. The fly stayed right there. Probably already laying eggs. This country didn't waste much time before it sucked every last hope of life out of anything that held still long enough.

Deaver figured to do everything by the book. Put Bette's anal scrapings in a plastic tube so they could check for disease, pick up his bedroll, his notebooks, and his canteen, and then hike into the first fringe town he could find and call in to Moab.

Deaver was all set to go, but he couldn't just walk off and leave the saddle. The rulebook said a rider's life is worth more than a saddle, but the guy who wrote that didn't have a five-dollar deposit on it. A week's wages. It wasn't like Deaver had to carry it far. He passed a road late

yesterday. He'd go back and sit on the saddle and wait a couple days for some truck to come by.

Anyway he wanted it on his record—Deaver Teague come back saddle and all. Bad enough to lose the horse. So he hefted the saddle onto his back and shoulders. It was still warm and damp from Bette's body.

He didn't follow Bette's hoofprints back along the edge of the grassland—no need to risk his own footsteps causing more erosion. He struck out into the thicker, deeper grass of last year's planting. Pretty soon he lost sight of the grey desert sagebrush; it was too far off in the wet hazy air. Folks talked about how it was in the old days, when the air was so clear and dry you could see mountains you couldn't get to in two days' riding. Now the farthest he could see was to the redrock sentinels sticking up out of the grass, bright orange when he was close, dimmer and greyer a mile or two ahead or behind. Like soldiers keeping watch in the fog.

Deaver's eyes never got used to seeing those pillars of orange sandstone, tortured by the wind into precarious dream shapes, standing right out in the middle of wet-looking deep green grassland. They didn't belong together, those colors, that rigid stone and bending grass. Wasn't natural.

Five years from now, the fringe would move out into this new grassland, and there'd be farmers turning the plow to go around these rocks, never even looking up at these last survivors of the old desert. In his mind's eye, Deaver saw those rocks seething hot with anger as the cool sea of green swept on around them. People might tame the soil of the desert, but never these temperamental, twisted old soldiers. In fifty years or a hundred or two hundred maybe, when the Earth healed itself from the war and the weather changed back and the rains stopped coming, all this grass, all those crops, they'd turn brown and die, and the new orchard trees would stand naked and dry until they snapped off in a sandstorm and blew away into dust, and then the grey sagebrush would cover the ground again, and the stone soldiers would stand there, silent in their victory.

That's going to happen someday, all you fringe people with your rows of grain and vegetables and trees, your towns full of people who all know each other and go to the same church. You think you all belong where you are, you each got a spot you fill up snug as a cork in a bottle. When I come into town you look hard at me with your tight little eyes because you never seen my face before, I got no place with you, so I better do my business and get on out of town. But that's how the desert thinks about you and your plows and houses. You're just passing through, you got no place here, pretty soon you and all your planting will be gone.

Beads of sweat tickled his face and dropped down onto his eyes, but Deaver didn't let go of the saddle to wipe his forehead. He was afraid if once he set it down he wouldn't pick it up again. Saddles weren't meant

to fit the back of a man, and he was sore from chafing and bumping into it. But he'd carried the saddle so far he'd feel like a plain fool to drop it now, so never mind the raw spots on his shoulders and how his fingers and wrists and the backs of his arms hurt from hanging onto it.

At nightfall he hadn't made the road. Even bundled up in his blanket and using the saddle as a windbreak, Deaver shivered half the night against the cold breeze poking here and there over the grass. He woke up stiff and tired with a runny nose. Wasn't till halfway to noon next day that he finally got to the road.

It was a thin ribbon of ancient grey oil and gravel, an old two-lane that was here back when it was all desert and nobody but geologists and tourists and the stubbornest damn cattle ranchers in the world ever drove on it. His arms and back and legs ached so bad he couldn't sit down and he couldn't stand up and he couldn't lay down. So he set down the saddle and bedroll and walked along the road a little to work the pain out. Felt like he was light as cottonwood fluff, now he didn't have the saddle on his back.

First he went south toward the desert till the saddle was almost out of sight in the haze. Then he walked back, past the saddle, toward the fringe. The grass got thicker and taller in that direction. Range riders had a saying: "Grass to the stirrup, pancakes and syrup." It meant you were close to where the orchards and cropland started, which meant a town, and since most riders were Mormons, they could brother-and-sister their way into some pretty good cooking. Deaver got sandwiches, or dry bread in towns too small to have a diner.

Deaver figured it was like all those Mormons, together they formed a big piece of cloth, all woven together through the whole state of Deseret, each person like a thread wound in among the others to make a fabric, tough and strong and complete right out to the edge—right out to the fringe. Those Mormon range riders, they might stray out into the empty grassland, but they were still part of the weave, still connected. Deaver, he was like a wrong-colored thread that looks like it's hanging from the fabric, but when you get up close, why, you can see it isn't attached anywhere, it just got mixed up in the wash, and if you pull it away it comes off easy, and the cloth won't be one whit weaker or less complete.

But that was fine with Deaver. If the price of a hot breakfast was being a Mormon and doing everything the bishop told you because he was inspired by God, then bread and water tasted pretty good. To Deaver the fringe towns were as much a desert as the desert itself. No way he could live there long, unless he was willing to turn into something other than himself.

He walked back and forth until it didn't hurt to sit down, and then he sat down until it didn't hurt to walk again. All day and no cars. Well,

that was his kind of luck—government probably cut back the gas ration again and nobody was moving. Or they sealed off the road cause they didn't want folks driving through the grassland even on pavement. For all Deaver knew the road got washed through in the last rain. He might be standing here for nothing, and he only had a couple days' water in his canteen. Wouldn't that be dumb, to die of thirst because he rested a whole day on a road that nobody used.

Wasn't till the middle of the night when the rumble of an engine and the vibration of the road woke him up. It was a long way off still, but he could see the headlights. A truck, from the shaking and the noise it made. And not going fast, from how long it took those lights to get close. Still, it was night, wasn't it? And even going thirty, it was a good chance they wouldn't see him. Deaver's clothes were all dark, except his T-shirt. So, cold as it was at night, he stripped off his jacket and flannel shirt and stood in the middle of the road, letting his undershirt catch the headlights, his arms spread out and waving as the truck got closer.

He figured he looked like a duck trying to take off from a tar patch. And his T-shirt wasn't clean enough for anybody to call it exactly white. But they saw him and laid on the brakes. Deaver stepped out of the way when he saw the truck couldn't stop in time. The brakes squealed and howled and it took them must be a hundred yards past Deaver before they stopped.

They were nice folks—they even backed up to him instead of making him carry the saddle and all up to where they finally got it parked.

"Thank heaven you weren't a baby in the road," said a man from the back of the truck. "You wouldn't happen to have brake linings with you, young man?"

The man's voice was strange. Loud and big-sounding, with an accent like Deaver never heard before. Every single letter sounded clear, like the voice of God on Mount Sinai. It didn't occur to Deaver that the man might be making a joke, not in *that* voice. Instead he felt like it was a sin that he didn't have brake linings. "No, sir, I'm sorry."

The Voice of God chuckled. "There was an era, before you remember, when no American in his right mind would have stopped to pick up a dangerous-looking stranger like you. Who says America has not improved since the collapse?"

"I'd like a bag of nacho Doritos," said a woman. "That would be an improvement." Her voice was warm and friendly, but she had that same strange way of pronouncing every bit of every word. Jackrabbits could learn English hearing her talk.

"I speak of trust, and she speaks of carnal delights," said the Voice of God. "Is that a saddle?"

"Government property, registered in Moab." He said it right off, so there'd be no thought of maybe making that saddle disappear.

The man chuckled. "Range rider, then?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, range rider, it seems trust among strangers isn't perfect yet. No, we wouldn't steal your saddle, even to make brake linings."

Deaver was plain embarrassed. "I didn't mean to say—"

"You did right, lad," said the woman.

The truck was a flatbed with high fencing staked around—ancient, but so were most trucks. Detroit wasn't exactly churning them out anymore. Inside the fence panels, straining against them, was a crazy jumble of tarps, tents, and crates stacked up in a way that made no sense, not in the dark anyway. Somebody flung their arm over the top of one of the softer-looking bundles, and then a sleepy-looking, mussy-haired girl about maybe twelve years old stuck her head up and said, "What's going on?" It was a welcome sound, her voice—none of that too-crisp talking from *her*.

"Nothing, Janie," said the woman. She turned back to Deaver. "And as for you, young man, show some sense and get your shirt back on, it's cold out here."

So it was. He started to put it on. As soon as she saw he was doing what she wanted, she climbed back into the cab.

He could hear the man tossing his saddlebags onto the truck. Deaver put his foot on the saddle till he had his shirt on, so the man wouldn't come back and try to lift it. Not that he could tell for sure, but by the little light from a sliver of moon, he didn't look like a young man, exactly, and Deaver wouldn't have an old guy lift his saddle for him.

Somebody else came around the front of the truck. A young man, with an easy walk and a smile so full of teeth it caught the moonlight brighter than a car bumper. He stuck out his hand and said, "I'm his son. My name's Ollie."

Well, if Deaver thought the Voice of God was weird, his son was even weirder. Deaver'd picked up a lot of riders back in his salvage days, and he'd been picked up himself more times than he could remember. Only a couple of people ever gave or asked for a name, and that was only at the end of the ride, and only if you talked a lot and liked each other. Here was a guy expecting to shake hands, like he thought Deaver was famous—or thought *he* was famous. When Deaver took his hand, Ollie squeezed hard. Like there was real feeling in it. There in the dark, people talking and acting strange, Deaver still half asleep, he felt like he was inside a dream, one that hadn't decided yet whether to be a nightmare.

Ollie let go of Deaver's hand, bent over, and slid the saddle right out from under Deaver's foot. "Let me get this up onto the truck for you."

It was plain that Ollie had never hoisted many saddles in his life. He was strong enough, but awkward. Deaver took hold of one end.

"Do horses really wear these things?" asked Ollie.

"Yep," said Deaver. Deaver knew the question was a joke, but he didn't know why it was funny, or who was supposed to laugh. At least Ollie didn't talk like the older man and woman—he had a natural sound to his voice, an easy way of talking, like you'd already been friends for years. They got the saddle onto the truck. Then Ollie swung up onto the truck and slid the saddle back behind something covered with canvas.

"Heading for Moab, right?" asked Ollie.

"I guess," said Deaver.

"We're heading to Hatchville," Ollie said. "We'll spend no more than two days there, and then it happens we'll be passing through Moab next." Ollie glanced over at his father, who was just coming back around the truck. Ollie was grinning his face off, and he spoke real loud now, as if to make sure his father heard him. "Unless you have a faster ride, how about you travel with us the whole way to Moab?"

The Voice of God didn't say a word, and it was too dark to read much expression on his face. Still, as long as Deaver didn't hear him saying, "Yes, Ollie's right, come ride with us," the message was plain enough. The son might've shook his hand, but the father didn't hanker for his company past morning.

Truth was Deaver didn't mind a bit. Seemed to him these people didn't have all their axles greased, and he wasn't thinking about their truck, either. He wasn't about to turn down a ride with them tonight—who knew when the next vehicle would come through here?—but he wasn't eager to hang around with them for two days, listening to them talk funny. "Hatchville's all I need," said Deaver.

Only after Deaver had turned down the offer did the Voice of God speak again. "I assure you, it would have been no trouble to take you on to Moab."

That's right, thought Deaver. It would've been no trouble, but you still didn't want to do it and that's fine with me.

"Come on, get aboard," said Ollie. "You'll have to ride in the cab—all the beds are occupied."

As Deaver walked up to the cab, he saw two more people leaning over the railing of the truck to get a look at him—a really old man and woman, white-haired, almost ghost-like. How many people were there? Ollie and the Voice of God, these two really old ones, the lady who was probably Ollie's mother, and that young girl named Janie. Six at least. At least they were trying to fit in with the government's request for folks to carry the most possible riders per vehicle.

Ollie's father got up into the cab before Deaver, giving him the window.

The woman was already in the middle, and when Ollie got into the driver's seat on the other side, it made for a tight fit all across. Deaver didn't mind, though. The cab was cold.

"It'll warm up again when we get going," said the woman. "The heater works, but the fan doesn't."

"Do you have a name, range rider?" asked the Voice of God.

Deaver couldn't understand this curiosity about names. I'm not renting a room with you people, I'm just taking a ride.

"Maybe he doesn't want to share his name, Father," said Ollie.

Deaver could feel Ollie's father stiffen beside him. Why was it such a big deal? "Name's Deaver Teague."

Now it was Ollie who seemed to tighten up. His smile got kind of set as he started the engine and put the truck in gear. Was this a bet? Whoever got Deaver to say his name won, and Ollie was mad because he had to pay off?

"Do you hail from anywhere in particular?" asked Ollie's father.

"I'm an immigrant," said Deaver.

"In the long run, so are we all. Immigrant from where?"

Am I applying for a job or something? "I don't remember."

The father and mother glanced at each other. Of course they assumed he was lying, and now they were probably thinking he was a criminal or something. So like it or not, Deaver had to explain. "Outriders picked me up when I was maybe four. All my people was killed by mobbers on the prairie."

Immediately the tension eased out of the parents. "Oh, I'm sorry," said the woman. Her voice was so thick with sympathy that Deaver had to look at her to make sure she wasn't making fun.

"Doesn't matter," Deaver said. He didn't even remember them, so it wasn't like he missed his folks.

"Listen to us," said the woman. "Prying at him, when we haven't so much as told him who we are."

So at least she noticed they were prying.

"I told him *my* name," said Ollie. There was a trace of nastiness in the way he said it, and suddenly Deaver knew why he got mad a minute ago. When Ollie introduced himself outside the truck, Deaver didn't give back his own name, but then when Ollie's father asked, Deaver told his name easy enough. It was about the stupidest thing to get mad over that Deaver ever heard of, but he was used to that. Deaver was always doing that, giving offense without meaning to, because people were all so prickly. Or maybe he just wasn't smart about dealing with strangers. You'd think he'd be better at it, since strangers was all he ever had to deal with.

The Voice of God was talking like he didn't even know Ollie was mad.

"We who travel in, on, and around this truck are minstrels of the open road. Madrigals and jesters, thespians and dramaturges, the second-rate sophoclean substitute for NBC, CBS, ABC, and, may the Lord forgive us, PBS."

The only answer Deaver could think of was a kind of smile, knowing he looked like an idiot, but what could he say that wouldn't let the man know that Deaver didn't understand a word he said?

Ollie grinned over at him. Deaver was glad to see he wasn't mad anymore, and so he smiled back. Ollie grinned even more. This is like a conversation between two people pretending not to be deaf, thought Deaver.

Finally Ollie translated what his father had said. "We're a pageant wagon."

"Oh," said Deaver. He was a fool for not guessing it already. Show gypsies. It explained so many people on one truck and the strange-shaped objects under the canvas and most of all it explained the weird way Ollie's father and mother talked. "A *pageant wagon*."

But apparently Deaver said it the wrong way or something, because Ollie's father winced and Ollie snapped off the inside light and the truck sped up, rattling more than ever. Maybe they were mad because they knew all the stories that got told about show gypsies, and they figured Deaver was being snide when he said "*pageant wagon*" like that. Fact was Deaver didn't much care whether pageant wagons left behind them a string of pregnant virgins and empty chicken coops. They weren't his daughters and they weren't his chickens.

Deaver moved around so much that a traveling show never came to any town he was in, at least that he knew about. In Zarahemla he knew they had an actual walk-in theater, but for that you had to dress nicer than any clothes Deaver owned. And the pageant wagons only traveled out in the hick towns, where Deaver never hung around long enough to know if there was a show going on or not. Only thing he knew about pageant wagons was what he found out tonight—they talked weird and got mad over nothing.

But he didn't want them thinking he had a low opinion of pageant wagons. "You doing a show in Hatchville?" asked Deaver. He tried to sound favorable to the idea.

"We have an appointment," said Ollie's father.

"Deaver Teague," said the woman, obviously changing the subject. "Do you know why your parents gave you two last names?"

Seemed like whenever these people ran out of stuff to talk about, they always got back to names. But it was better than having them mad. "The immigrants who found me, there was a guy named Deaver and a guy named Teague."

"How awful, to take away your given name!" she said.

What was Deaver supposed to say to that?

"Maybe he likes his name," said Ollie.

Immediately Ollie's mother got flustered. "Oh, I wasn't criticizing—"

Ollie's father jumped right in to smooth things over. "I think Deaver Teague is a very distinguished-sounding name. The name of a future governor."

Deaver smiled a little at that. Him, a governor. The chance of a non-Mormon governor in Deseret was about as likely as the fish electing a duck to be king of the pond. He may be in the water, but he sure ain't one of *us*.

"But our manners," said the woman. "We still haven't introduced ourselves. I'm Scarlett Aal."

"And I'm Marshall Aal," said the man. "Our driver is our second son, Laurence Olivier Aal."

"Ollie," said the driver. "For the love of Mike."

What Deaver mostly heard was the last name. "Aal like A-A-L?"

"Yes," said Marshall. He looked off into the distance even though there was nothing to see in the dark.

"Any relation to Royal Aal?"

"Yes," said Marshall. He was very curt.

Deaver couldn't figure out why Marshall was annoyed. Royal's Riders were the biggest heroes in Deseret.

"My husband's brother," said Scarlett.

"They're very close," said Ollie. Then he gave a single sharp hoot of laughter.

Marshall just raised his chin a little, as if to say he was above such tomfoolery. So Marshall didn't like being related to Royal. But definitely they were brothers. Now that Deaver was looking for it, Marshall Aal even looked kind of like Royal's pictures in the paper. Not enough to mistake them for each other. Royal had that ragged, lean, hard-jawed look of a man who doesn't much care where he sleeps; his brother, here in the cab of the pageant wagon, his face was softer.

No, not softer. Deaver couldn't call this sharp-featured man *soft*. Nor delicate. Elegant maybe. Your majesty.

Their names were backward. It was Marshall here who looked like a king, and Royal who looked like a soldier. Like they got switched in the cradle.

"Do you know my Uncle Roy?" asked Ollie. He sounded real interested.

It was plain that Marshall didn't want another word about his brother, but that didn't seem to bother Ollie. Deaver didn't know much about brothers, or about fathers and sons, not having been any such himself, but why would Ollie want to make his father mad on purpose?

"Just from the papers," said Deaver.

Nobody said anything. Just the sound of the engine rumbling on, the feel of the cab vibrating from the road underneath them.

Deaver had that sick feeling he always got when he knew he just didn't belong where he was. He'd already managed to offend everybody, and they'd offended him a few times, too. He just wished somebody else had picked him up. He twisted a little on the seat and leaned his head against the window. If he could go to sleep till they got to Hatchville, then he could get out and never have to face them again.

"Here we've been talking all this time," said Scarlett, "and the poor boy is so tired he can hardly stay awake." Deaver felt her hand pat his knee. Her words, her voice, her touch—they were just what he needed to hear. She was telling him he hadn't offended everybody after all. She was telling him he was still welcome.

He could feel himself unclench inside. He eased down into the seat, breathed a little slower. He didn't open his eyes, but he could still picture the woman's face the way she looked before, smiling at him, her face showing so much sympathy it was like she thought he was her own son.

But of course she could look like that whenever she wanted to—she was an actress. She could make her face and voice seem any old way she chose. Wasn't no particular reason Deaver should believe her. Smarter if he didn't.

What was her name again? Scarlett. He wondered if her hair had once been red.

The sky was just pinking up with dawn, clear and cold outside the heated cab, when they rattled over a rough patch in the road. Deaver wasn't awake and then he *was* awake. First words he said were from his dream even as it skittered away from him just out of reach. "It's your stuff," he said.

"Don't get mad at *me* about it," said the woman sitting next to him. It took him a moment to realize that it wasn't Scarlett's voice.

In the night sometime the pageant wagon people must have stopped and switched places. Now that he thought about it, Deaver had half-awake memories of Scarlett and other people talking soft and the seat bouncing. Marshall and Scarlett were gone, and so was Ollie. The man at the wheel wasn't one of the people Deaver saw last night. They had called Ollie their second son; this must be his older brother. The young girl he saw on the back of the truck last night—Janie—she was asleep leaning on the driver's shoulder. And next to Deaver was about the prettiest woman he could remember seeing in his life. Of course women got to looking nicer and nicer the more time you spent on the range, but it was sure she was the best-looking woman he ever woke up next to.

Not that he'd ever say such a thing. He was plain embarrassed even to think it.

She was smiling at him.

"Sorry. I must have been—"

"Oh, it was some dream," she said.

I look at you and I think maybe I'm still dreaming. The words were so clear in his mind that he moved his lips without meaning to.

"What?" she asked.

She looked at him like she'd never look at another soul until he answered. Deaver was plain embarrassed. He blurted out something like what he was thinking. "I said if you're part of the dream I don't want to wake up."

The man at the wheel laughed. Pleasantly. Deaver liked his laugh. The woman didn't laugh, though. She just smiled and crinkled up her eyes, then looked down at her lap. It was the absolutely perfect thing for her to do. So perfect that Deaver felt like he was starting to float.

"You've done it to this poor ranger man already, Katie," said the driver. "Pay no attention to her, my friend. She specializes in enchanting handsome strangers she discovers in the cab of her family's truck. If you kiss her she turns into a frog."

"You wake up very sweetly," said Katie. "And you turn a compliment so a woman can almost believe it's true."

Only now did Deaver really come awake and realize he was talking to strangers and had no business saying what came to mind, or trying to make his jokes. In the roadside inns where he used to stop while he was driving a scavenger truck, he always talked to the waitresses like that, giving them the most elegant compliments that he thought they might believe. At first he was flirting, teasing them, which was the only way he knew to talk to a woman—he couldn't bring himself to talk crude like the older drivers, so he talked pretty. Soon, though, he stopped making it a joke, because those women would always look at him sharp to see if he was mocking them, and if they saw he wasn't, why, it brightened them, like pulling the chain on a light inside their eyes.

But that was back when he was seventeen, eighteen years old, lots younger than the women he met. They liked him, treated him like a sweet-talking little brother. This woman, though, she was younger than him, and sitting tight up against him in a cab so small it caught all her breath so he could breathe it after, and the sky outside was dim and the light made soft pink shadows on her face. He was wide awake now, and shy.

You don't flirt with a woman in front of her brother.

"I'm Deaver Teague," he said. "I didn't see you last night."

"I didn't exist last night," she said. "You dreamed me up and here I am."

She laughed and it wasn't a giggle or a cackle, it was a low-pitched sound in her throat, warm and inviting.

"Deaver Teague," said the driver, "I urge you to remember that my sister Katie Hepburn Aal is the best actress in Deseret, and what you're seeing right now is Juliet."

"Titania," she said. In that one word she suddenly became elegant and dangerous, her voice even more precise than her mother's had been, like she was queen of the universe.

"Medea," her brother retorted nastily.

Deaver figured they were calling names, but didn't know what they meant.

"I'm Toolie," said the driver.

"Peter O'Toole Aal," said Katie. "After the great actor."

Toolie grinned. "Daddy wasn't subtle about wanting us to go into the family business. Nice to meet you, Deaver."

All this time Katie didn't take her eyes off Deaver. "Ollie said you know Uncle Royal."

"No," said Deaver. "I just know about him."

"I thought you range riders worked under him."

Was that why she was sitting next to him? Hoping he'd talk about their famous uncle? "He's over the outriders."

"You want to be an outrider?"

It wasn't something he talked about much to anybody. Most young men who signed on as rangers were hoping someday to get into Royal's Riders, but the ones who got in usually made it before they reached twenty-five, which meant they had five or six years on horseback before they applied to the outriders. Deaver was twenty-five when he joined up, and he hadn't had four years as a range rider yet. Except for a couple of older guys, most rangers would have a good laugh if they knew how much Deaver wanted to ride with Royal Aal.

"It's something that might happen," said Deaver.

"I hope you get your wish," she said.

This time it was his turn to search her face to see if she was making fun. But she wasn't. He could see that. She really hoped for something good to happen to him. He nodded, not knowing what else to say.

"Riding out there," she said, "helping people make it here to safety."

"Taking apart the missiles," said Toolie.

"Ain't too many missiles now," said Deaver.

Which pretty much ended the conversation. Deaver was used to that, having his words be the ones that hung in the air, nobody saying a thing afterward. A long time ago he tried to apologize or explain what he said,

something to make the embarrassed silence go away. Last few years, though, he realized he probably hadn't said something wrong. Other people just had a hard time talking to him for long, that's all. Nothing against him. He just wasn't the kind of person you talk to.

Deaver wished he actually knew their uncle, so he could tell them about him. It was plain they were hungry for word about him. If their father'd been feuding with Royal for a long time, they might hardly know him. That'd be strange, for the kinfolk of the best-loved hero of Deseret not to know a bit more about him than any stranger just reading the paper.

They crested a hill. Toolie pointed. "There's Hatchville."

Deaver had no idea how long ago they left the grassland and came into the fringe, but from the size of Hatchville he figured this town was probably twelve, fifteen years old. Well back from the edge now, really not fringe at all anymore. Lots of people.

Toolie slowed enough to gear down the truck. Deaver listened with an ear long attuned to motors from his years nursing the scavenger trucks from one place to another. "Engine's pretty good for one this old," said Deaver.

"You think so?" said Toolie. He perked right up, talking about the engine. These folks made a living only as long as the motor kept going.

"Needs a tune-up."

Toolie made a wry face. "No doubt."

"Probably the mix in the carburetor's none too good."

Toolie laughed in embarrassment. "Do carburetors mix something? I always thought they just sat there and carbureted."

"Ollie takes care of the truck," Katie said.

The little girl between them woke up. "Are we there yet?"

They were passing the first houses on the outskirts of town. The sky was pretty light now. Almost sunrise.

"You remember where the pageant field is in Hatchville, Katie?" Toolie asked.

"I can't tell Hatchville from Heber," said Katie.

"Heber's the one with mountains all around like a bowl," said Janie.

"Then this is Hatchville," said Katie.

"I knew that," said Toolie.

They ended up at the town hall, where everybody stood around the truck in the cold morning air while Ollie and Katie went in looking for somebody to give them a permit for a place to set up for the pageant. Deaver figured that this time of morning the only one on duty'd be the night man who did the data linkups with Zarahemla—every town had one—so he didn't bother going in on his own business. As for them going in, well, it was their business, not his.

Sure enough, they came out empty-handed. "The night guy couldn't give us a permit," said Ollie, "but the pageant field's up on Second North and then out east to the first field that's got no fence."

"And he gave us such a *Christian* welcome," said Katie. Her smile was full of mischief. Ollie hooted. Deaver was having fun just watching them.

Toolie shook his head. "Small-town pinheads."

Katie launched into a thick hicktown accent, full of Rs so hard Deaver thought she must have her tongue tickling the back of her throat. "And you better stay there till you come back in at nine and get a permit, cause we respect the law around here."

Deaver couldn't help but laugh along with the others, even though the accent she was making fun of was pretty much the way he talked.

Marshall, though, he wasn't laughing as he stood there combing his sleep-crazy hair with his fingers. "Ungrateful, suspicious, small-minded bigots, all of them. I wonder how they'd like to pass this autumn without a single visit from a pageant wagon. There's nothing to stop us from driving on through." This early in the morning he didn't talk so careful. Deaver heard a little naturalness in his speech, and even though it was only by accident, it kind of made Deaver feel better to know that the real person Marshall used to be wasn't hidden all that deep after all.

"Now Marsh," said Scarlett. "You know that our calling comes from the Prophet, not from these small-town people. If their minds are little and ugly and closed, isn't it our job to bring them a broader vision? Isn't that why we're here?"

Katie sighed pointedly. "Why does it always have to come back to the Church, Mother? We're here to make a living."

She didn't speak harsh or nasty, but people acted like she'd slapped her mother. Scarlett immediately put her hands to her cheeks and turned away, tears filling her eyes. Marshall looked like he was about to tear into Katie with words so hot they could start a brushfire, and Ollie was grinning like this was the best thing he'd seen all year.

But right then Toolie took a step toward Deaver and said, "Well, Deaver Teague, you can see how it is with show people. We have to make a grand scene out of everything."

That reminded folks that there was a stranger among them, and all at once they changed. Scarlett smiled at Deaver. Katie laughed lightly like it was all a joke. Marshall started nodding wisely, and Deaver knew the next words he said would be as elegant as ever.

It was plainly time for Deaver to say thank you and get his saddle off the truck and go take a nap somewhere out of the wind till it got time to report in to Moab. Then the Aals could quarrel with each other all they liked. Parting would be fine with Deaver—he'd been a bit of painless

charity to them, and they'd been a ride into town for him. Everybody got what they needed and goodbye.

What messed things up was that when Marshall got pretty much the same idea—that it was time for Deaver to go—he didn't trust Deaver to have sense enough to figure it out himself. So Marshall smiled and nodded and put his arm around Deaver's shoulder. "I suppose, Son, that you'll want to stay here and wait until the offices open up at eight o'clock."

Deaver didn't take offense at what he said—he was just hinting for Deaver to do what he already meant to do, so that was fine. Folks had a right to keep their family squabbles away from strangers. But giving him a hug and calling him "son" while telling him to go away, it made Deaver so mad he wanted to hit somebody.

All the time he was growing up Mormons kept doing that same thing to him. They always fostered him out to live in some Mormon family's house who'd always make him go to church every Sunday even though they knew he wasn't a Mormon and didn't want to be one. The other kids knew right off he wasn't one of them and didn't make any bones about it—they left him alone and didn't pretend they liked him or even cared whether he lived or died. But there was always some Relief Society president who patted his head and called him "sweetie" or "you dear thing," and whenever the bishop passed him, he'd put his arm around him and call him "son," just like Marshall, and pretend they were only joking when they said, "How long till you see the light and get baptized?"

That friendly and nice stuff always lasted until Deaver finally told them "never" loud enough and nasty enough that they believed him. From then on until he got fostered somewhere else, the bishop would never touch him or speak to him, just fix him with a cold stare as Deaver sat there in the congregation and the bishop sat up on the stand being holy. Sometimes Deaver wondered what would have happened if just once, some bishop had kept on being friendly even after Deaver told him he'd never get baptized. If maybe he might've felt different about Mormons if ever their friendship turned out to be real. But it never happened.

So here was Marshall Aal doing just what those bishops always did, and Deaver plain couldn't help himself, he shrugged Marshall's arm off and stepped back so fast that Marshall's arm was still hanging there in the air for a second. His face and his fists must have shown how mad he was, too, because they all stared at him, looking surprised. All except Ollie, who stood there nodding his head.

Marshall looked around at the others. "Well, I don't know what I . . . " Then he gave up with a shrug.

Funny thing was, Deaver's anger was gone already, gone in a second. He never let rage hold onto him—that only gets you in trouble. Worst of all, now they all thought he was mad because they were sending him

away. But he didn't know how to explain that it was okay, he was glad to go. It always ended up like this whenever he left a foster home, too. The family was sending him away because they were tired of him, which was fine cause he never much liked them either. He didn't mind leaving and they were glad to see him go, and yet nobody could just come out and say that.

Well, so what. They'd never see him again. "Let me get my saddle," Deaver said. He headed for the side of the truck.

"I'll help you," said Toolie.

"No such thing," said Scarlett. She caught ahold of Deaver's elbow and held it tight. "This young man has been out in the grassland for I don't know how many days, and we're *not* sending him away without breakfast."

Deaver knew she was just saying that for good manners, so he said no thanks as polite as he could. That might have been the end of it except right then Katie came to him and took his left hand—which was his only free hand, since Scarlett had tight hold on his right elbow. "Please stay," she said. "We're all strangers in this town, and I think we ought to stick together till we have to go our separate ways."

Her smile was so bright that Deaver had to blink. And her eyes looked at him so steady, it was like she was daring him to doubt that she meant it.

Toolie picked up on it and said, "We could use another hand setting up, so you'd be earning the meal."

Even Marshall added his bit. "I meant to ask you myself. I hope you will come with us and share our poor repast."

Deaver was hungry, all right, and he didn't mind looking at Katie's face though he wished she'd let go of his hand, and he particularly wished Scarlett would unclamp his elbow—but he knew he wasn't really wanted, and so he said no thanks again and got his arms back from the women and headed over to get his saddle off the truck. That was when Ollie laughed and said, "Come on, Teague, you're hungry and Father feels like a jerk and Mother feels guilty and Katie's hot for you and Toolie wants you to do half his work. How can you just walk off and disappoint everybody?"

"Ollie," said Scarlett sternly.

But by now Katie and Toolie were laughing, too, and Deaver just couldn't help laughing himself.

"Come on, everybody into the truck," said Marshall. "Ollie, you know the way, you drive."

Marshall and Scarlett and Toolie and Ollie piled into the cab, so Deaver had to ride in back with Katie and Janie and a younger brother, Dusty. The two really old people he saw last night were way in the back of the

truck. Katie kept Deaver right up front, behind the cab. Deaver couldn't figure out if she was flirting with him or what. And if she was, he sure didn't know why. He knew his clothes stank of dirt and sweat and the horse he'd been riding till it died, and he also knew he wasn't much to look at even when he shaved. Probably she was just being nice, and didn't know how to do that except by using that smile of hers and looking at him under heavy eyelids and touching his arm and his chest whenever she talked to him. It was annoying, except that it also felt pretty nice. Only that made it even more annoying because he knew that it wasn't going anywhere.

The town was finally coming awake as they drove to the pageant field. Deaver noticed they didn't go straight there. No, they drove that noisy truck up and down every road there was in town, most of them just dirt traces since nothing much got paved these days outside Zarahemla. The sound of the rattletrap truck brought people looking out their windows, and children spurted out the doors to lean on picket fences, jumping up and down.

"Is it Pageant Day?" they'd shout.

"Pageant Day!" answered Katie and Janie and Dusty. Maybe the old folks in back were shouting, too—Deaver couldn't hear. Pretty soon the news was ahead of the truck, and people were already lined up along the edge of the road, straining to see them. That was when the Aals started pulling the tarp off a couple of the big pieces. One of them looked like the top of a missile, and another one was a kind of tower—a tall steep pyramid like a picture Deaver saw in school, the Pyramid of the Sun in Mexico City. When the people saw the rocket, they started yelling, "Man on the moon!" and when they saw the pyramid, which they couldn't see till the truck passed, they'd scream and laugh and call out, "Noah! Noah! Noah!"

Deaver figured they must have seen the shows before. "How many different pageants do you do?" he asked.

"Three," said Katie. She waved at the crowd. "Pageant Day!" Then, still talking loud so he could hear her over the truck and the crowds and her little brother and sister yelling, she said, "We do our *Glory of America* pageant, which Grandfather wrote. And *America's Witness for Christ*, which is the old Book of Mormon pageant from the Hill Cumorah—everybody does that one—and at Christmas we do *The Glorious Night*, which Daddy wrote because he thought the regular Christmas pageants were terrible. That's our whole repertoire in towns like this. Pageant Day!"

"So it's all Mormon stuff," said Deaver.

She looked at him oddly. "*Glory of America* is American. *The Glorious Night* is from the Bible. Aren't you Mormon?"

Here it is, thought Deaver. Here comes the final freeze-out. Or the

sudden interest in converting me, leading up to a freeze-out soon enough. He had forgotten, for just a while this morning, that he hadn't told them yet, that they still figured he was one of them, that he basically belonged. The way that these show gypsies were still part of Hatchville, because they were all Mormons. The way most of the other range riders liked being in town, among fellow Mormons. But now, finding out he wasn't one of them, they'd feel like he fooled them, like he stuck himself in where he didn't belong. Now he really regretted letting them talk him into coming along to breakfast like this. They never would've tried to talk him into it if they knew he wasn't one of them.

"Nope," said Deaver.

He couldn't believe it when she didn't even pause. Just went on like nothing got said. "We'd rather do other shows, you know, besides those three. When I was little we spent a year in Zarahemla. I played Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*. Do you know what I've always wanted to play?"

He didn't have any idea.

"You have to guess," she said.

He wasn't sure he'd ever even heard the name of a play, let alone a person in one. So he seized on the only thing he could halfway remember. "Titanic?"

She looked at him like he was crazy.

"In the cab. You said you were—"

"Titania! The queen of the fairies from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. No, no. I've always wanted to play—you won't tell anybody?"

He sort of shrugged and shook his head at the same time. Who would he tell? And if it was a real secret, why would she tell *him*?

"Eleanor of Aquitaine," she said.

Deaver had never heard that name in his life.

"It was a part Katharine Hepburn played. The actress I was named after. A movie called *A Lion in Winter*." She almost whispered the title. "I saw a tape of it once, years ago. Actually I saw it about five times, in one single day, over and over again. We were staying with an old friend of Grandpa's in Cedar City. He had a VCR that still ran on his windmill generator. The movie's banned now, you know."

Movies didn't mean much to Deaver. Hardly anybody ever got to see them. Out here on the fringe nobody did. Electricity was too expensive to waste on televisions. Besides, a former salvage man like Deaver knew there just weren't enough working televisions in Deseret for more than a couple in each town. It wasn't like the old days, when everybody went home every night and watched TV till they fell asleep. Nowadays folks only had time for a show when a pageant wagon came to town.

They were past the houses now, pulling onto a bumpy field that had been planted in wheat, long since harvested.

Katie's voice suddenly went husky and trembled a little. "I'd hang you from the nipples, but you'd shock the children."

"What?"

"She was such a magnificent woman. She was the first to wear pants. The first *woman* to wear them. And she loved Spencer Tracy till he died, even though he was a Catholic and wouldn't divorce his wife to marry her."

The truck pulled to a stop at the eastern edge of the field. Janie and Dusty jumped right off the truck, leaving them alone between the set pieces and the back of the cab.

"I rode bare-breasted halfway to Damascus," said Katie, in that husky, quavery voice again. "I damn near died of wind burn, but the troops were dazzled."

Deaver finally guessed that she was quoting from the movie. "They did a movie where a woman said *damn*?"

"Did I offend you? I thought since you weren't a Mormon, you wouldn't mind."

That sort of attitude made Deaver crazy. Just because he wasn't a Latter-day Saint, Mormons thought he'd want to hear their favorite dirty joke, or else they started swearing cause they thought it would make him more comfortable, or they just assumed that he slept with whores all the time and got drunk whenever he could. But he swallowed his anger without showing it. After all, she meant no harm. And he liked having her so close to him, especially since she hadn't moved any farther away when she found out he was a gentile.

"I just wish you could see the movie," said Katie. "Katharine Hepburn is—magnificent."

"Isn't she dead?"

Katie turned to him, her face a mask of sadness. "The world is poorer because of it."

He spoke the way he always did to a sad-looking woman who was too close to ignore. "I guess the world ain't too poor if you're in it."

Her face brightened at once. "Oh, if you keep saying things like that I'll *never* let you go." She took hold of his arm. His hand had just been hanging at his side, but now that she was pressed up against him, he realized his hand was being pressed into the soft curve of her belly just inside her hip bone. If he even twitched his hand he'd be touching her where a man had no right without being asked. Was she asking?

Toolie, standing on the ground beside the truck, pounded one fist on Deaver's boot and the other on Katie's shoe. "Come on, Katie, let go of Deaver so we can use him to help with the loading."

She squeezed his arm again. "I don't have to," she said.

"If she gets annoying, Deaver, break her arm. That's what *I* do."

"You only did it once," said Katie. "I never let you do it again." She let go of Deaver and jumped off the truck.

For a moment he stood there, not moving his hand or anything. She just talked to him, that's all. That's all it meant. And even if she meant more, he wasn't going to do anything about it. You don't answer folks' hospitality by diddling with their daughter. After a minute—no, just a few seconds—he swung himself off the truck and joined the others.

Except for picking the exact spot to park and leveling the truck, the family didn't set to work right away. They gathered in the field and Parley Aal, the old man from the back of the truck, he said a prayer. He had a grand, rolling voice, but it wasn't so clear-sounding as Marshall's, and Parley said his Rs real hard like the Mormons Katie made fun of back in town. The prayer wasn't long. Mostly all he did was dedicate the ground to the service of God, and ask the Lord's Spirit to touch the hearts of the people who came to watch. He also asked God to help them all remember their lines and be safe. So far only Katie knew Deaver wasn't Mormon, and he said amen at the end just like the others.

Unloading the truck and setting up for the show was as hard as the hardest work Deaver'd ever done in his life. There was more stuff on that truck than he would ever have thought possible. The tower and the missile had doors in back, and they were packed tight with props and machinery and supplies. It took only an hour to pitch the tents they lived in—four of them, plus the kitchen awning—but that was the easy part. There was a generator to load off the truck on a ramp, then hook up to the truck's gas tank. It was so awkward to handle, so heavy and temperamental, that Deaver wondered how they did it when he wasn't there. It took all the strength he and Toolie and Ollie and Marshall had.

"Oh, Katie and Scarlett usually help," said Toolie.

So he was saving Katie work. Was that why she was treating him so nice? Well, that was all right with him. He was glad to help, and he didn't expect payment of any coin. What else was he going to do this morning? Call in to Moab and then sit around and wait for instructions, most likely. Might as well be doing this. Best not to remember the way her body pressed against his hand, the way she squeezed his arm.

They carried metal piping and thick heavy blocks of steel out about fifteen yards from the truck, one on each side of where the audience would be, and then assembled them into trees that held the lights. They kept tossing around words that Deaver never heard of—*fresnel*, *ellipsoidal*—but before long he was getting the hang of what each light was for. Ollie was the one in charge of all the electrical work. Deaver had a little bit of practice with that sort of thing, but he made it a point not

to show off. He just did whatever Ollie ordered, fast and correct and without a word unless he had to ask a question. By the time the lights were wired, aimed, and focused, Ollie was talking to Deaver like they were friends since first grade. Making jokes, even teasing a little—"Do they make some special horse perfume for you range riders to spray on?"—but mostly teaching Deaver everything there was to know about stage lighting. Why the different colored filters were used, what the specials did, how the light plot was set up, how to wire up the dimmer board. Deaver couldn't figure what good it was ever going to do him, knowing how to light a stage show, but Ollie knew what he was talking about, and Deaver didn't mind learning something new.

Even with the lights set up the work was hardly started. They had breakfast standing around the gas stove. "We're working you too hard," said Scarlett, but Deaver just grinned and stuffed another pancake in his mouth. Tasted like they actually had sugar in them. A gas stove, their own generator, pancakes that tasted like more than flour and water—they might live on a truck and sleep in tents, but these pageant wagon people had a few things that people in the fringe towns usually had to do without.

By noon, dripping with sweat and aching all over, Deaver stood away from the truck with Ollie and Toolie and Marshall as they surveyed the stage. The missile had been taken down and replaced with the mast of a ship; the side of the truck had been covered with panels that made it look like the hull of a boat; and the machinery was all set up to make a wave effect with blue cloth out in front of it. A black curtain hid the pyramid from sight. Dusty raised and dropped the curtain while the men watched. Deaver thought it looked pretty exciting to have the pyramid suddenly revealed when the curtain dropped, but Marshall clucked his tongue.

"Getting a little shabby," said Marshall.

The curtain was patched a lot, and there were some tears and holes that hadn't been patched yet.

"It's shabby at noon, Daddy," said Toolie. "At night it's good enough." Toolie sounded a little impatient.

"We need a new one."

"While we're wishing, we need a new truck a lot more," said Ollie.

Toolie turned to him—looking a little angry, it seemed to Deaver, though he couldn't think why Toolie should be mad. "We don't need a new truck, we just need to take better care of this one. Deaver here says it isn't carbureting right."

All of a sudden the cheerfulness went right out of Ollie's face. He turned to Deaver with eyes like ice. "Oh, really?" said Ollie. "Are you a mechanic?"

"I used to drive a truck," said Deaver. He couldn't believe that all of a sudden he was in the middle of a family argument. "I'm probably wrong."

"Oh, you're right enough," said Ollie. "But see, I take all the huge amounts of money they give me to buy spare parts and use it all up in every saloon and whorehouse in the fringe, so the engine just never gets repaired."

Ollie looked too mad to be joking, but what he was saying couldn't possibly be true. There weren't any saloons or whorehouses in the fringe.

"I'm just saying we can't afford a new truck, or a new curtain either," said Toolie. He looked embarrassed, but then he deserved to—he *had* as much as accused Ollie of doing a lousy job with the truck.

"If that's what you were doing," said Ollie, "why'd you have to get Teague here on your side?"

Deaver wanted to grab him and shout straight into his face: I'm not on anybody's side. I'm not part of your family and I'm not part of this argument. I'm just a range rider who needed a lift into town and helped you unload eight tons of junk in exchange for breakfast.

Toolie was trying to calm things down, it looked like, only he wasn't very good at it. "I'm just trying to tell you and Father that we're broke, and talking about new curtains and new trucks is like talking about falling into a hole in the ground and it turns out to be a gold mine. It just isn't going to happen."

"I was just *talking*," said Ollie.

"You were getting sarcastic and nasty, that's what you were doing," said Toolie.

Ollie just stood there for a second, like some really terrible words were hanging there in his mind, waiting to get flung out where they could really hurt somebody. But he didn't say a thing. Just turned around and walked away, around the back end of the truck.

"There he is, off in a huff again," said Toolie. He looked at his father with a bitter half-smile. "I don't know what I did, but I'm sure it's all my fault he's mad."

"What you did," said Marshall, "was humiliate him in front of his friend."

It took Deaver a moment to realize Marshall was referring to him. The idea of being Ollie's friend took Deaver by surprise. Was that why Ollie worked so close to him so much of the morning, teaching him how the electrical stuff was done—because they were friends? Somehow Deaver'd got himself turned from a total stranger into a friend without anybody so much as asking him if he minded or if he thought it was a good idea.

"You need to learn to be sensitive to other people, Toolie," said Marshall. "Thank heaven you don't lead this company, the way you do what

you like without a thought for your brother's feelings. You just run roughshod over people, Toolie."

Marshall never exactly raised his voice. But he was precise and cruel as he went on and on. Deaver was plain embarrassed to watch Toolie get chewed on. Toolie did kind of pick a fight with Ollie, but he didn't deserve this kind of tongue-lashing, and it sure didn't help matters much to have Deaver standing there watching. But Deaver couldn't figure how to get away without it looking like he disapproved. So he just stood there, kind of looking between Marshall and Toolie so he didn't meet anybody's eyes.

Over at the truck, Katie was sitting on the top of the pyramid, sewing. Dusty and Janie were setting up the fireworks for the end of the show. Ollie had the hood open, fiddling with something inside. Deaver figured he could probably hear every word Marshall said, chewing out Toolie. He could imagine Ollie smiling that mean little smile of his. He didn't like thinking about it, particularly knowing that Ollie thought of him as a friend. So he let his gaze wander to the pyramid, and he watched as Katie worked.

It seemed an odd thing, to sit so high, right in the sun, when there was plenty of shade to sit in. It occurred to Deaver that Katie might be on top of the pyramid just so he'd be sure to see her. But that was pure foolishness. What happened this morning didn't mean a thing—not her talking to him, not her pressing close to him, meant nothing. He must be a plain fool to imagine a smart good-looking woman like her was paying heed to him in the first place. She was on top of the pyramid cause she liked to look out over the town.

She raised her hand and waved to him.

Deaver didn't dare wave back—Marshall was still going strong, ragging on Toolie about things that went back years ago. Deaver looked away from Katie and saw how Toolie just took it, didn't even show anger in his face. Like he switched off all his emotions while his father talked to him.

Finally it ended. Marshall had finally wound down and now he stood there, waiting for Toolie to answer. And all Toolie said was, "Sorry, sir." Not angry, not sarcastic, just simple and clean as can be. Sorry, sir. Marshall stalked off toward the truck.

As soon as his father was out of earshot, Toolie turned to Deaver. "I'm sorry you had to hear that."

Deaver shrugged. Had no idea what to say.

Toolie gave a bitter little laugh. "I get that all the time. Except that Father likes it better when there's somebody there to watch."

"I don't know about fathers," said Deaver.

Toolie grinned. "Daddy doesn't live by the standards of other men. Mere logic, simple fairness—those are the crutches of men with inferior

understanding." Then Toolie's face grew sad. "No, Deaver, I love my father. This isn't about Ollie or how I treat him, just like what I said to Ollie wasn't about the truck. I'm too much like my dad and he knows it and that's what he hates about me." Toolie looked around him, as if to see what needed doing. "I guess I better head to town for the official permit, and you need to get in there and report to Moab, don't you?"

"Guess so."

Toolie stopped with his mother to see if she needed anything from town. Scarlett recited a list, mostly staples—flour, salt, honey. Things they could get without paying, cause it was their right to have it from the community storehouse. As they talked, Ollie came by and tossed a dirty air filter at Toolie's chest. "I need a new air filter just like that one only clean."

"Where are you going, Laurence?" asked Scarlett.

"To sleep," he said. "I was up all night driving, in case you forgot." Ollie started to walk away.

"What about brake linings?" asked Toolie.

"Yeah, see if they've got a mechanic who can do that." Ollie ducked into a tent. Anger was thick in the air. Deaver noticed that Scarlett didn't even ask why.

She finished telling her list to Toolie, sometimes talking over what they would probably get donated by the audience in a place like Hatchville. Then Toolie set out, Deaver in tow. Deaver wanted to take his saddle with him, but Toolie talked him out of it. "If they tell you to get a ride today, your driver can come out and pick it up. And if you end up riding to Moab with us day after tomorrow, you might as well leave the saddle here." As if he was holding the saddle hostage to make sure Deaver came back.

Deaver wasn't sure why he didn't just say no thanks and then pick up the saddle and carry it with him anyway. He knew they hadn't wanted him in the first place, and it was just good manners or maybe guilt or embarrassment or something that made Toolie want to keep the saddle so Deaver had to come back at least one more time. Funny thing, though: Deaver didn't mind. It had been a long time since anybody went to any trouble to try to get him to stay with them. Them saying he was Ollie's friend. The way Katie treated him. That was part of it. A lot more of his feeling came out of just working alongside them, helping unload the truck and set up for the show. Deaver had enough sweat spilled in this field that he really wasn't hoping to leave for Moab today. He wanted to see what all the fuss was about. He wanted to see the show. That's all it was, nothing more.

Yet even as he reached that conclusion, he knew it was a lie. Sure, he wanted to see the show, but there was something more. An old hunger,

one so deep and ancient, so long unsatisfied that Deaver mostly forgot he was even hungry. Like some part of his soul had already starved to death. Only something was happening here to wake up that old hunger, and he couldn't go away without seeing if somehow maybe it could be satisfied. Not Katie. Or not just Katie, anyway. Something more. Maybe by the time he left for Moab, he'd find out what it was he wanted so bad that it made his dream of joining Royal's Riders seem kind of faint and far away.

He and Toolie walked a direct route to the town hall, not winding through the whole village the way they had that morning. There were still children excited to see them, though. "Who are you!" they called. "Are you Noah? Are you Jesus? Are you Armstrong?"

Toolie waved at them, smiled, and usually told them, "No, my daddy plays that part."

"Are you Alma?"

"Yes, that's one of the parts I play."

"What's the show tonight?"

"Glory of America."

All the way through town Deaver noticed how bright-eyed the children were, how daring they thought it was to talk right to somebody from the pageant wagon.

"Sounds like your show's the biggest thing they ever see," Deaver said.

"Kind of sad, isn't it?" said Toolie. "In the old days, a show like this—it would've been nothing."

Deaver went with Toolie into the mayor's office. The secretary had neat, close-cropped hair. Plainly he was the kind of man who never spent a week without a barber—or a day without a bath, probably. Deaver wasn't sure whether he despised or envied the man.

"I'm with the pageant wagon," said Toolie, "and I need to change our temporary permit to a regular one." Deaver saw how he put on an especially humble-but-cheerful tone, and he couldn't help but think that his own life would have been a lot easier if he'd only learned how to act like that toward his foster parents or the bishops of the wards he lived in. Of course, Toolie only had to act like that for a few minutes today, while Deaver would've had to keep it up for days and weeks and years on end. Like crossing your eyes—sure, you can do it, but keep it up too long and you get a headache.

And then he thought how when he was little, somebody told him that if you cross your eyes too often they'll stick that way. What if acting all humble and sweet worked that way? What if it got to be such a habit you forgot you were acting, the way Marshall's and Scarlett's fancy acting voices came out of their mouths even when they were picking up a range rider in the middle of the night. Do you become whatever you act like?

Deaver had plenty of time to think about all this, because the secretary didn't say a word for the longest time. He just sat there and eyed Toolie up and down, not showing any expression at all on his very clean and untanned face. Then he looked at Deaver. He didn't exactly ask a question, but Deaver knew what he was asking anyway.

"I'm a range rider," Deaver said. "They picked me up out on the road. I need to call Moab."

A range rider—town people pretty much despised them, but at least they knew what to do with them. "You can go right in there and call." The secretary indicated an empty office. "The sheriff's out on a call."

Deaver went on into the office and sat at the desk. An old salvage desk—might be one of the ones he found and brought in himself in the old days when he was a kid. Not ten years ago.

He couldn't get an operator—the line was tied up—and as he waited, he could hear what went on in the other room.

"Here's our family business license from Zarahemla," Toolie was saying. "If you just look us up in the business database—"

"Fill out the forms," said the secretary.

"We are licensed by the state of Deseret, sir," said Toolie. Still polite, still humble.

There was no answer. Deaver leaned over the desk and saw Toolie sitting down, filling out the forms. Deaver understood why Toolie was doing it, all right—giving in to get along. This was how the secretary proved he was in charge. This was how he made sure the show gypsies knew they didn't belong here, that they had no *rights* here. So Toolie would fill out the forms, and as soon as he was gone the secretary would call up the business database, verify their license, and throw out the forms. Or maybe he'd go through the forms line by line, looking for some contradiction, some mistake, so he could have grounds to throw the pageant wagon out of Hatchville. And it wasn't right. The Aal family had natural troubles all their own, they didn't need some short-haired over-washed flunky in the mayor's office adding to their trouble supply.

For a moment, pure rage flowed through Deaver, just like this morning when Marshall put his arm around him and called him *son*. His arms trembled, his toes pumped up and down, like he was getting ready to dance or wrestle—or punch some power-hungry bastard right in the face and break his nose and cover him with his own blood, mat it in his hair, all over his clothes, so even when he didn't hurt so bad, there'd be stains in his shirt to remind him that people can only be pushed *so far* and then one day they bust out and do something about it, show you what all your power's good for—

And then Deaver got it under control, calmed himself down. There was no shortage of volunteer self-trained sons-of-bitches in the world, and

this secretary wasn't the worst of them, not close. Toolie was doing the right thing, bowing down and letting the man feel important. Letting him have the victory now, so that the family would have the greater victory later. Cause when they left this town, the Aals would still be themselves, still be a family, while this secretary, he wouldn't have a speck of power over them. That was freedom, the power to leave whenever you wanted to. Deaver understood that kind of power. It was the only kind he'd ever had or ever wanted.

He finally got an operator and told him who he was and who he needed to talk to and why. It took the operator forever to check the computer and verify that Deaver was indeed a range rider and that he was therefore authorized to make an unlimited number of calls to regional headquarters in Moab. At last he got through. It was Meech, the regular dispatcher.

"Got the scrapings?" asked Meech.

"Yeah."

"Fine, then. Come on in."

"Quick?"

"Not quick enough to pay money for. Just catch a ride. No hurry."

"Two, three days all right?"

"No rush. Except I got approval here for you to apply to Royal's Riders."

"Why the hell didn't you say so, dickhead!" cried Deaver into the phone. He'd been on that waiting list for three years.

"I didn't want you to wet your pants right off, that's why," said Meech. "Please note that this is just permission to apply."

How could Deaver tell him that he never expected to get permission even for that? He figured that was the way they'd freeze non-Mormons out, by keeping them from applying for the job in the first place.

"And I got about five guys, Teague, asking if you'll transfer your right to apply. They're pretty eager."

It was legal to sign over your spot to somebody farther down the list—it just wasn't legal to accept money for it. Still, the outrider waiting list was long, and there were bound to be some men on it who never meant to apply, who signed up just to make a little money selling their spot when it came along. Deaver knew that if he said yes and Meech gave him the names of those eager applicants, he'd start getting promises and favors. What he wouldn't get, though, was another chance to apply. "No thanks, Meech."

The secretary appeared in the doorway, glowering. "Just a second," Deaver said, and put his hand over the phone. "What is it?"

"Are you aware of the public decency laws?" asked the secretary.

It took a second for Deaver to figure out what he was talking about. Had the secretary heard Meech hint about selling the right to apply? No—it was the public decency laws the secretary was talking about.

Deaver thought back over his phone conversation. He must have said *hell* too loud. And even though *dickhead* wasn't on the statutory list, it fit quite easily under "other crude or lascivious expressions or gestures."

"Sorry," he said.

"I hope you're *very* sorry."

"I am." He did his best to imitate the humble way Toolie'd been talking before. It was especially hard because he was suddenly in the mood to start laughing out loud—they were going to let him apply to the outriders!—and he figured the secretary wouldn't like it if Deaver suddenly laughed. "Very sorry, sir." He picked up that *sir* bit from Toolie, too.

"Because in Hatchville we don't wink at sin."

In Hatchville you probably don't piss, either, you just hold it all inside until you die. But Deaver didn't say it, just looked right at the secretary as calmly as he could until the man finally took his unbearable burden of righteousness back to his desk.

That's all Deaver needed, a misdemeanor arrest right when he was about to apply to be an outrider. "You still hanging on there, Meech?"

"By my fingernails."

"I'll be there in two days. I've got my saddle."

"Ain't you cool."

"Am too."

"Are not."

"See you, Meech."

"Give your erosion reports to the reporter there, okay?"

"Got it," said Deaver. He hung up.

The secretary grudgingly told him where the reporter's office was. Of course the reporter wasn't transmitting—that was done at night, over the same precious phone lines used for voice calls during the day. But he'd enter it into the computer today, and he didn't look thrilled at getting even Deaver's relatively slim notebook.

"All these coordinates," said the reporter.

"It's my job to write them down," said Deaver.

"You're very good at it," said the reporter. "Yesterday's desert, today's grass, tomorrow's farm." It was the slogan of the new lands. It meant the conversation was over.

When Deaver got back, Toolie wasn't in the secretary's office anymore. He was in the mayor's office, and because the door was partly open, Deaver could hear pretty well, especially since the mayor wasn't trying very hard to talk softly.

"I don't *have* to give you a permit, Mr. Aal, so don't start flashing your license from Zarahemla. And don't think I'm impressed because your name is Aal. There's no law says a hero's kinfolk got to be worth shit, do you understand me?"

Shit was definitely on the statutory list. Deaver looked at the secretary, but the secretary just moved more papers around. "Just don't wink," said Deaver quietly.

"What?" asked the secretary.

If he could hear Deaver's comment, he could sure hear the mayor. But Deaver decided not to make a big deal about it. "Nothing," he said. No reason for him to provoke the secretary any further. Since he came into town with the pageant wagon, anything he did to annoy people would put the Aal family in a bad light, and it sounded like they had trouble enough already.

"Young girls see you in those lights and costumes, they think you really are the Prophet Joseph or Jesus Christ or Alma or Neil Armstrong, and so they're suckers for any unscrupulous bastard who doesn't care what he does to a girl."

Finally Toolie raised his voice, dropping the humility act just for a moment. Deaver was relieved to know Toolie had a breaking point. "If you have an accusation—"

"The Aal Pageant and Theatrical Association is implicated in a lot of these, do I make myself clear? No warrants, but we'll be watching. You tell everybody in your company, we're watching you."

Toolie's answer was too mild to hear.

"It will not happen in Hatchville. You will not ruin some girl and then disappear with your commission from the Prophet."

So somebody *did* believe all those stories about show gypsies. Maybe Deaver used to believe them, too. But once you know people like the Aals, those stories sound pretty stupid. Except in Hatchville, of course, where they don't wink at sin.

Toolie was real quiet when he came out of the mayor's office, but he had the permit and the requisition form for the bishop's storehouse—both signed by the same man, of course, since the mayor *was* the bishop.

Deaver didn't talk about what he heard. Instead he told Toolie all about his getting permission to apply for a job change, which meant he at least had a shot at getting into the outriders.

"What do you want to do that for?" asked Toolie. "It's a terrible life. You travel thousands of miles on horseback, tired all the time, people looking to kill you if they get a chance, out in the bad weather every day, and for what?"

It was a crazy question. Every kid in Deseret knew why you wanted to be one of Royal's Riders. "Save people's lives. Bring them here."

"The outriders mostly deliver mail from one settled area to another. And make maps. It isn't that much more exciting than the work you're doing now."

So Toolie *had* looked into the work his uncle Royal was doing. How would Marshall feel about that?

"You ever think of joining?" asked Deaver.

"Not me," said Toolie.

"Come on," said Deaver.

"Never since I grew up enough to make intelligent choices." No sooner were the words out of his mouth than Toolie must have realized what he'd said. "I don't say it isn't an intelligent choice for *you*, Deaver. It's just—if one of us leaves, the family show is pretty well dead. Who'd do my parts? Dusty? Grandpa Parley? We'd have to hire somebody from outside the family—but how long would somebody like that work for nothing but food and shelter, like we do? If anybody leaves the show, then it's over for everybody. What would Dad and Mom do for a living? So how could I go off and join the outriders?"

There was something in Toolie's tone of voice, something in his manner that said, This is real. This is something I'm really afraid of—the family breaking up, the pageant wagon going out of business. And also: This is why I'm trapped. Why I can't have any dreams of my own, like you do. And because he was speaking true, like Deaver was somebody he trusted, Deaver answered the same way, saying stuff he never said out loud to anybody, or not lately, anyway.

"Being an outrider, it's got a name to it. A range rider—what do they call us? Rabbit-stompers. Grass-herders."

"I've heard worse," said Toolie. "Something about getting personal with cows. You rangers have almost as low a name as we do."

"At least you're somebody every town you go into."

"Oh, yes, they roll out the red carpet for us."

"I mean you're Noah or Neil Armstrong or whatever."

"That's what we *play*. That's not who we are."

"That's who you are to *them*."

"To the children," said Toolie. "To the grownups all a person is is what he does here in town. You're the bishop or the mayor—"

"The bishop *and* the mayor."

"Or the sheriff or the Sunday school teacher or a farmer or whatever. You're somebody regular. We come in and we don't fit."

"At least some of them are glad to see you."

"Sure," said Toolie. "I'm not saying we don't have it better than you, some ways. A gentile in a place like this."

"Oh. Katie told you." So it *had* mattered to her he wasn't Mormon, enough to tell her brother. Mormons *always* cared when somebody wasn't one of them. In a way, though, it made it so the way Toolie talked to him, like a friend—it meant even more, because he knew Deaver was a gentile all along.

And Toolie had the grace to act a little embarrassed about knowing something Deaver only told to Katie. "I wondered, so I asked her to find out."

Deaver tried to put him at ease about it. "I'm circumcised, though."

Toolie laughed. "Well, too bad it isn't Israel where you live. You'd fit right in."

Some trucker'd told him when he was about sixteen that Mormons were so damned righteous because they couldn't help it—after you get your dick cut all the way around, the sap can't flow anymore. Deaver knew the part about sap flowing wasn't true, but not till this moment did he realize that the trucker was also putting him on about circumcision being part of the Mormon religion. Once again Deaver had said something stupid and offensive without meaning to. "Sorry. I thought you Mormons—"

But Toolie was just laughing. "See? The ignorance is thick on every side." He clapped his hand onto Deaver's shoulder and left it there for a minute as they walked along the street of Hatchville. And this time it didn't make Deaver mad. This time it felt right to have Toolie's hand on him. They got to the storehouse and arranged for a cart to deliver their supplies that afternoon.

"Soldiers of the United States! We could march on Philadelphia and—we could march—"

"March under arms and grind Philadelphia beneath our boots."

"Soldiers of the United States! We could march under arms and boot Phila—"

"Grind Philadel—"

"Grind Philadelphia beneath our boots, and what then could—"

"What Congress then could—"

"What Congress then could deny our rightful claim upon the treasury of this blood which we created by—"

"Nation which we created—"

"I'll start over, I'm just confused a little, Janie, let me start over."

Old Parley had gone over George Washington's speech to his troops so many times that Deaver could have recited it word perfect, just from hearing it while he worked on bypassing a relay to the heater fan. With his head buried deep in the truck's engine, one leg holding him in place by hooking across the fender, the sound of Parley memorizing echoed loud. Sweat dripped off Deaver's forehead into his eyes and stung him a little. Nasty work, but as long as the fan kept blowing they'd remember him.

Got it. Now all he had to do was climb out, start up the truck, and try it to see if the fan motor actually worked.

"I've got it now, Janie," said Parley. "But are we now, for the sake of money, to deny the very principles of freedom for which we fought, and for which so many of our comrades fell? Help me here Janie, just a word."

"I."

"I what?"

"I say."

"Got it! I say thee, Nay!"

"I say that in America, soldiers are subject to the lawful government, even when that lawful government acts unjustly against them."

"Don't read me the whole speech!"

"I thought if you heard it once, Grandpa, you could—"

"You are my prompter, not my understudy!"

"I'm sorry, but we've been over it and—"

Deaver started the truck engine. It drowned out the sound of Parley Aal unfairly blaming Janie for his collapsing memory. The fan worked. Deaver turned off the motor.

"—suddenly starting up! I can't work on these lines under these circumstances, I'm not a miracle worker, nobody could hold these long speeches in their heads with—"

It wasn't Janie's voice that answered him now—it was Marshall's. "The motor's off now, so go ahead."

Parley sounded more petulant. Weaker. "I say the words so often they don't mean anything to me anymore."

"They don't have to mean anything, you just have to say them."

"It's too long!"

"We've cut it down to the bare bones. Washington tells them they could seize Philadelphia and break Congress, but then all their fighting would be in vain, so be patient and let democracy work its sluggish will."

"Why can't I say *that*? It's shorter."

"It's also not at all what Washington would say. Dad, we can't have a Glory of America Pageant without George Washington."

"Then you do it! I just can't do these things anymore! Nobody could remember all these long speeches!"

"You've done them a thousand times before!"

"I'm too old! Do I have to say it that plain, Marshall?" Then, more softly, almost pleading. "I want to go home."

"To Royal." The name was like acid sizzling on wood.

"To home."

"Home is under water."

"You should be doing Washington's speech, and you know it. You've got the voice, and Toolie's ready to play Jefferson."

"Is he ready to play Noah?" Marshall spoke scornfully, as if the idea was crazy.

"You were his age when you started playing Noah, Marshall."

"Toolie isn't mature enough!"

"Yes he is, and you should be doing my parts, and Donna and I should be home. For the love of heaven, Marsh, I'm seventy-two and my world is gone and I want to have some peace before I die." Parley's speech ended with a ragged whisper. It was the perfect dramatic touch. Deaver sat in the cab, imagining the scene he couldn't see: Old Parley staring at his son for a long moment, then turning slowly and walking with weary dignity back to the tent. Every argument in this family is played out in set speeches.

The silence lasted long enough that Deaver felt free to open the door and leave the cab. He immediately looked back to where Janie and Parley had been practicing. Both gone. Marshall too.

Under the kitchen awning sat Donna, Parley's wife. She was old and frail, much older-seeming than Parley himself. Once they brought down her rocking chair early in the morning, she just sat there in the shade, sometimes sleeping, sometimes not. She wasn't senile, really; she fed herself, she talked. It was like she wanted to sit in her chair, close her eyes, and pretend she was somewhere else.

Now, though, she was here. As soon as she saw that Deaver was looking at her, she beckoned to him. He came over.

He figured she had in mind to tell him he ought to be more careful. "I'm sorry for starting the truck right then."

"Oh, no, the truck was nothing." She patted a stool sitting in the grass next to her. "Parley's just an old man who wants to quit his job."

"I know the feeling," said Deaver.

She smiled sadly, as if to say that there wasn't a chance in the world he knew that feeling. She looked at him, studying his face. He waited. After all, she had called him over. Finally she said what was on her mind. "Why are you here, Deaver Teague?"

He took it as a challenge. "Returning a favor."

"No, no. I mean why are you here?"

"I needed a ride."

She waited.

"I thought I ought to fix the heater fan."

Still she waited.

"I want to see the show."

She raised an eyebrow. "Katie had nothing to do with it?"

"Katie's a pretty girl."

She sighed. "And funny. And lonely. She thinks she wants to get away, but she doesn't. There is no Broadway anymore. The rats have taken over the theater buildings. They chewed up the NBC peacock and didn't leave a feather." She giggled at her own joke.

Then, as if she knew she'd lost the thread of her own conversation, she fell silent and stared off into space. Deaver wondered if maybe he ought to just go back to the truck or take a walk or something.

She startled him by turning her head and gazing at him again, her gaze sharper than ever before. "Are you one of the Three Nephites?"

"What?"

"Appearing on the road like that. Just when we needed an angel most."

"Three Nephites?"

"The ones who chose to stay behind on Earth till Christ comes again. They go about doing good, and then they disappear. I don't know why I thought that, I know you're just an ordinary boy."

"I'm no angel."

"But the way the young ones turned to you. Ollie, Katie, Toolie. I thought you came to—"

"To what?"

"Give them what they want most. Well, why don't you anyway? You don't have to be an angel to work miracles, sometimes."

"I'm not even a Mormon."

"I'll tell you the truth," said the old lady. "Neither was Moses."

He laughed. So did she. Then she got that faraway look again. After he waited a while, her eyelids got heavy, flickered, closed. He stood up, stretched, turned around.

Scarlett was standing not five feet away, looking at him.

He waited for her to say something. She didn't.

Voices off in the distance. Scarlett glanced toward them, breaking the silent connection between them. He also turned. Beyond the truck, the first group of townspeople were coming—looked like three families together, with benches and a couple of ancient folding chairs. He heard Katie call out to them, though he couldn't see her behind the truck. The families waved. The children ran forward. Now he could see Katie emerging, out in the open field. She was wearing the hoop skirts of Betsy Ross—Deaver knew the Betsy Ross scene because he'd had to learn the cue when to raise the flag, so that Janie could help Dusty with the costume change. The children overran her, turned her around; Katie squatted and hugged the two smallest both at once. She stood up then and led them toward the wagon. It was very theatrical; it was a scene played out for the children's parents, and it worked. They laughed, they nodded. They would enjoy the show. They would like the pageant family, because Katie greeted their children with affection. Theatrical—and yet utterly honest. Deaver didn't know how he knew that. He just knew that Katie really did love to meet the audience.

And then, thinking about that, he knew something else. Knew that he'd seen Katie play out some scenes today that she didn't mean, not the

same way, not with that fervency that he saw when she greeted the children. This was real. Her flirting with Deaver, that was false. Calculated. Again, Deaver didn't know how he knew it. But he knew. Katie's smile, her touch, her attention, all that she'd given him today, all that she'd halfway promised, it was an act. She was like her father, not like Toolie. And it tasted nasty, just thinking about it. Not so much because she'd been faking it. Mostly because Deaver'd been taken in so completely.

"Who can find a capable wife?" asked Scarlett softly.

Deaver felt himself blush.

But it wasn't a real question. Scarlett was reciting. "Her worth is far beyond coral. Her husband's whole trust is in her, and children are not lacking."

He could see how the children clung to Katie. She must be telling them a story. Or just pretending to be Betsy Ross. The children laughed.

"She repays him with good, not evil, all her life long. When she opens her mouth, it is to speak wisely, and loyalty is the theme of her teaching. She keeps her eye on the doings of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her sons with one accord call her happy; her husband too, and he sings her praises: Many a woman shows how capable she is; but you excel them all."

It might be a recitation, but it had to have a point to it. Deaver turned to Scarlett, who was smiling merrily. "Are you proposing to me?" asked Deaver.

"Charm is a delusion and beauty fleeting; it is the God-fearing woman who is honored. Extol her for the fruit of all her toil, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

As best Deaver could figure it out, Scarlett was trying to get Deaver thinking about a wife when he looked at Katie. "You hardly know me, Mrs. Aal."

"I think I do. And call me Scarlett."

"I'm not a Mormon, either." He figured she'd probably been told already, but Deaver knew how much store Mormons set by getting married in the temple, and he also knew he never planned to set foot inside another Mormon temple in his life.

But Scarlett seemed to be ready for that objection. "That's not *Katie's* fault, now, is it, so why punish the poor girl?"

He couldn't very well say to her, Woman, if you think your daughter's really in love with me, then you're a plain fool. "I'm a stranger, Scarlett."

"You were this morning. But Mother Aal told us who you *really* are."

Now he understood that she was teasing him. "If I'm an angel, I got to say the pay isn't too good."

But she didn't really want to play. She wanted to talk seriously.

"There's something about you, Deaver Teague. You don't say much, and half what you say is wrong, and yet you caught Katie's eye, and Toolie said to me today, 'Too bad Teague has to leave,' and you made a friend of Ollie, who hasn't made a friend in years." She looked away, looked toward the truck, though nothing was happening there. "Do you know, Deaver, sometimes I think Ollie is his uncle Roy all over again."

Deaver almost laughed out loud. Royal? The hero of the outriders shouldn't be compared to Ollie, with his mocking smile, his petulant temper.

"I don't mean Royal the way he is now, and I especially don't mean his carefully constructed public image. You had to know him before, back before the collapse. A wild boy. He had to put his nose in everything. And more than his nose, if you understand me. It seemed as though anything his body craved, he couldn't rest until he got it. Terrible trouble. Stayed out of jail only by luck and praying. Mother Aal's praying, his luck."

As she spoke, Deaver noticed that her voice was losing that precision, that studied warmth. She sounded more like a normal person. Like as if just remembering the old days made her talk the way she used to, before she got to be an actress.

"He couldn't hold a job," she said. "He'd get mad at somebody, he couldn't take getting bossed around or chewed out, couldn't stand doing the same thing day after day. He got married when he was eighteen to a girl who was so pregnant the baby could have tossed the bouquet. He couldn't stay home, he couldn't stay faithful. Right before the Six Missile War, he up and joined the army. Never sent a dime home, and then the government fell apart and all that time, you know who took care of his wife and baby? Babies by then."

"You?"

"Well, I suppose. But not by *my* choice. *Marsh* took them in, they lived in our basement. I was so angry. There was barely enough for Marsh and me and our children, so every bite they ate, I felt like they were taking it out of the mouths of little Toolie and Katie and Ollie. I said so, too—not to them, but to Marsh. In private. I'm not a complete bitch."

Deaver blinked at hearing her use that word. "What did he say?"

"They're family, that's what he said. Like that was the whole answer. Family looks out for family, he said. He wouldn't even consider turning them out. Even when the university stopped classes and nobody had jobs, when we were eating dandelion greens and planting the whole yard for a garden just so the rain could come down and rip it all out—that terrible first year—rain tearing it out again and again—"

She stopped a moment to remember, to live in those days again. When she finally spoke again, she was brisk, getting on with the story.

"Then he came up with the idea of the pageant wagon. The Aal Family Pageant was the very first, you know. Not a truck, not then—a trailer in those days, so it really was a kind of wagon, and we built the sets and Marsh wrote *The Glory of America* and adapted the old Hill Cumorah pageant so we'd have a Book of Mormon show and we went on the road. Oh, we were always a theatrical family. I met Marsh when his mother was directing plays at church."

She looked down at her mother-in-law, asleep in the chair.

"Whoever would have thought play-acting would keep us alive! It was Marsh took the Aal name and made it stand for something, one end of Deseret to the other. And somehow he made it—we made it pay enough to raise our own kids and Royal's too, kept bread on the table for all of us. His wife wasn't easy to live with, never pulled her weight, but we kept her the whole time, too. Until she ran off one day. And we still kept her kids, never put them in foster homes. They knew they could count on a place with us forever."

She couldn't possibly know how those words stung deep in Deaver's heart, reminding him of foster homes that always began with promises of "you're here for good" and ended with Deaver putting his ugly little brown cardboard box in the back of somebody else's car and riding off without ever even a letter or postcard from one of the old families. He didn't want to hear any more talk about places you could count on. So he turned the conversation back to Ollie. "I don't see how Ollie's like Royal. He hasn't left any children behind and run off."

She got a hard look in her eyes. "Hasn't he? It isn't for lack of trying."

Deaver thought of what the mayor said to Toolie this morning. The Aal family was implicated. Getting girls pregnant and running off, that was no joke, that could get a man in jail. And here Scarlett was as much as confessing that the accusation wasn't just small-town rumors, it was true and she knew it. And after what the mayor said, Deaver knew that if Ollie got caught, it would surely mean the loss of the family's license. They'd be dead broke—what value would their costumes and set pieces have to anybody else? They'd end up on some fringe farm somewhere. Deaver tried to imagine Marshall getting along with other farmers, fitting in. Tried to picture him covered with dirt and sweat, mud high up on his boots. That was what Ollie was flirting with, if Scarlett's accusation was true.

"I bet Ollie wouldn't do that," said Deaver.

"Ollie is Roy all over again. He can't control himself. He gets a desire, then he'll fulfill it and damn the consequences. We never stay in the same place long enough for him to get caught. He thinks he can go on like this forever."

"You ever explain it to Ollie like this?"

"You can't explain things to Ollie. Or at least *I* can't, and certainly Marsh and Toolie can't. He just blows up or walks away. But maybe you, Deaver. You're his friend."

Deaver shook his head. "That's the kind of thing you don't talk about to somebody you met this morning."

"I know. But in time—"

"I just got my chance to apply to the outriders."

Her face went grim. "So you'll be gone."

"I was going anyway. To Moab."

"Range riders come into town. They get mail. We might keep in touch."

"Same with outriders."

"Not for us," she said. Deaver knew it was true. They couldn't stay in touch with one of Royal's Riders. Not with Marshall feeling the way he did.

But still—if Ollie was really like Royal when he was younger, they could find some hope in that. "Royal came home, didn't he? Maybe Ollie'll grow out of it."

"Royal never came home."

"He's got his wife and kids now," said Deaver. "I've read about them. In the papers."

"That's how Royal came home—in the papers. We started reading stories about the outriders, and how the most daring one among them was a man named Royal Aal. In those days we were famous enough that they used to put in a little tag: 'No relation to the theatrical Aal family.' Which meant they were asking him, and he was denying it. His kids were old enough to read, some of them. We never denied him. We'd tell the kids, 'Yes, that's your daddy. He's off doing such an important work—saving people's lives, destroying the missiles, fighting the mobbers.' We'd tell them how everybody sacrifices during hard times, and their sacrifice was doing without their daddy for a while. Marshall even wrote to Roy, and so did I, telling him about his children, how they were smart and strong and good. When Joseph, the oldest, fell from a tree and shattered his arm so badly the doctors wanted to take it off, we wrote to him about his son's courage, and how we made them save the arm no matter what—and he never answered."

It made Deaver sick to think of such a thing. He knew what it was like to grow up without a mother and father. But at least he knew that his parents were dead. He could believe that they *would* have come for him if they could. What would it be like to know your father was alive, that he was famous, and still have him never come, never write, never even send a message. "Maybe he didn't get the letters."

She laughed bitterly. "He got them, all right. One day—Joseph was twelve, he was just ordained a deacon a few weeks before—the sheriff



shows up at our campsite in Panguitch, and he's got a court order. A court order, listing Royal and his wife as co-complainants—yes, they were back together now. Telling us to surrender the children of Royal Aal into the sheriff's custody or face kidnapping charges!"

Tears flowed down her face. They weren't beautiful, decorous actress tears; they were hot and bitter, and her face was twisted with emotion.

"He didn't come himself, he didn't write to ask us to send the children, he didn't even thank us for keeping them alive for ten years. Nor did that ungrateful bitch of a wife of his, and she ate at our table for five of those years."

"What did you do?"

"Marsh and I took his kids into the tent and told them that their father and mother had sent for them, that it was time for them to be together with their family again. You've never seen kids look happier. They'd been reading the papers, you see. That's who they thought Royal Aal was, the great hero. Like finding out that after years of being an orphan, your father the king had finally found you and you were going to be a prince and princesses. They were so happy, they hardly said goodbye to us. We don't blame them for that. They were children, going home. We don't even blame them for never writing to us since then—Royal probably forbade them to. Or maybe he told them lies about us, and now they hate us." Her left hand was in front of her face; her right hand clenched and unclenched on her lap, gathering folds of her dress in a sodden mass. "So don't tell me how Royal grew out of it."

This wasn't exactly the story folks usually told about Royal Aal.

"I read an article about him once," said Scarlett. "Several years ago. About him and his oldest son Joseph riding together out on the prairies, a second generation of hero. And they quoted Roy about how he had such a hard family life, that there were so many rules he always felt like he was in prison, but that he had rescued his boy Joseph from that prison."

Deaver had read that article, the way he read everything about Royal Aal. He thought he understood it when he read it; thought how he was in prison, too, and began to dream that maybe Royal Aal could rescue him, too. But now he'd spent a day with Royal's family. He could see how confining it was. Fights and squabbles. But also working together, everybody with a place that nobody else could fill. The kind of family he always wished for as a kid.

A thousand times over the years Deaver had imagined going to the outrider headquarters in Golden and going up to Royal Aal and shaking his hand, hearing Royal welcome him as one of his outriders. Only now if it really happened he'd be thinking of something else—like Marshall and Scarlett being served that court order. Like kids growing up without

a word from their father. Like telling lies to make folks who'd done good to you look bad.

At the same time, Deaver could also see how it might look different to Royal, how as a kid he might have come to hate his brother Marshall—the man really was hard to take sometimes—and Deaver could guess that Parley wasn't the nicest, most understanding father in the world. This wasn't a family full of perfectly nice people. But that didn't mean they deserved dirt from him.

So how could Deaver become an outrider, knowing all this about Royal Aal? How could he follow such a man? Somehow he'd have to put all this out of his mind, forget that he knew it. Maybe someday he'd even get to know Royal well enough that he could sit down by a fire one night and say, What about your family? I met them once—what about them? And then he'd hear Royal's side of the story. That could change everything, knowing the other guy's side of the story.

Only he couldn't imagine any story Roy could tell that would justify what Scarlett went through—what she was still going through, just remembering. "I can see why you don't like to hear much about Royal now."

"We don't use our name much anymore," said Scarlett. "Do you know what that does to Marsh? Everybody thinks Roy's a hero, while every town we go into, they treat us like we're all thieves and vandals and full-time fornicators. Someone once asked us if we stopped using the Aal name on our pageant wagon in order to protect Roy's reputation." She laughed—or sobbed. It wasn't too easy to tell. "It near eats Marsh alive. We still live from the charity of the Church. Every bit of food from the bishop's storehouse. You don't know this, probably, Deaver Teague, but back in the old days, you only ate from the bishop's storehouse if you were down and out. A failure. It still feels that way to Marsh and me. Roy doesn't eat from the storehouse. Nor does his family these days. Roy doesn't move from town to town in the fringe."

Deaver knew something about how it felt when every bite you ate was somebody's charity, when you being alive at all was a favor other people did for you out of the goodness of their hearts. No wonder there was a touch of anger always under the surface in this family, ready to lash out whenever something went even a little bit wrong.

"And the thing that hurts worst about the way they treat us in these pitiful little towns is that we deserve it."

"I don't think so," said Deaver.

"Sometimes I wish Ollie would just run off like Roy—only do it now, *before* he has a wife and children for his brother Toolie to take care of."

That didn't seem fair to Deaver, and for once he felt bold enough to speak up about it. "Ollie works hard. I was with him all morning."

"Yes, yes," said Scarlett. "I know that. He isn't Roy. He tries to be good. But he always stands there with that little half-smile, as if he thinks we're all so terribly amusing. I saw that smile on Roy's face the whole time he was with us, before he ran off. That smile's like a sign that says, I may be with you, but I'm no part of you."

Deaver had noticed the smile, but he never thought that was what it meant. It seemed to Deaver that Ollie mostly smiled when he was embarrassed about the way his family was acting, or when he was trying to be friendly. It wasn't Ollie's fault that when he smiled, his face reminded people of Royal Aal.

"Ollie's old enough to be on his own," said Deaver. "When I was his age, I'd been driving a scavenger truck for a couple of years."

Scarlett looked at Deaver in disbelief. "Of course Ollie's *old* enough. But if he left, who'd do the lighting? Who'd keep the truck running? Marshall and Toolie and Katie and me—what do we know except the shows?"

Didn't she see the contradiction in what she said? Ollie couldn't go because the family needed him—but all the time he was there, his own mother was wishing he'd run off so he wouldn't cause the harm his uncle caused. There was no sense in it at all. For all Deaver knew, Ollie was nothing at all like his uncle. But if his own mother saw him that way, then it was hard to see how Ollie could ever prove to her it wasn't true.

Deaver had seen a lot of families over the years. Even though he was never really a part of any one of them, he lived right with them, saw how the parents treated their children, saw how the children treated their parents. Better than most people, he understood how it was when something was wrong in a family. Everybody tries to hide it, to pretend everything's okay, but it always squeezes out somewhere. The Aals had all that pain from what Royal did and they couldn't get back at Royal, not a bit. But it so happened that they had a son who was a little bit like Royal. It was bound to squeeze out there, some of that pain. Deaver wondered how long Scarlett had thought of Ollie as being just like Roy. Wondered if Ollie had ever caught a scrap of a sentence about it. Or if one time when she was mad Scarlett had said it right out, "You're just like your uncle, you're exactly like him!"

That was the kind of thing a kid doesn't forget. One time a foster mother called Deaver a thief, and when it turned out her own kid had stolen the sugar and sold it, even though she made a big deal about apologizing to Deaver, he never forgot it. It was like a wall between them for the months before he was finally fostered somewhere else. You just can't unsay what's been said.

Thinking of that, of people saying cruel things they can't take back, Deaver remembered how Marshall gave a tongue-lashing to Toolie that

morning. There was more going on in this family than Ollie reminding his mother of Roy Aal:

"I shouldn't have said any of this to you, Deaver Teague."

Deaver realized he must have been silent a long time, just standing there. "No, it's all right," said Deaver.

"But there's something about you. You're so sure of yourself."

People had said that to Deaver before. He long since figured out that it was because he didn't talk often, and when he did, he didn't say much.

"I suppose," he said.

"And when Mother Aal called you an angel—"

Deaver gave a little laugh.

"I thought—maybe the Lord led you to us. Or led us to you. At a time when we are in such great need of healing. Maybe you don't even realize it yourself, but maybe you're here to work a miracle."

Deaver shook his head.

"Maybe you can work a miracle without even knowing you're doing it." She took Deaver's hand—and now the theatricality was back. She was trying to make him feel a certain way, and so she was acting. Deaver was glad to know he could see the difference so clearly. It meant he could believe what she said when she wasn't acting. "Oh, Deaver," she said. "I'm so scared about Ollie."

"Scared he'll run away? Or scared he won't?"

She whispered. "I don't know what I want. I just want things to be better."

"I wish I could help you. But about all I can do is work the flag in the Betsy Ross scene. And rewire the heater fan in the truck."

"Maybe that's enough, Deaver Teague. Maybe just by being who you are, maybe that'll do it. What if God sent you to us? Is that so impossible?"

Deaver had to laugh. "God never sent me anywhere."

"You're a good man."

"You don't know that."

"You only have to take one bite of the apple to know if it's ripe."

"I just happened to come along."

"Your horse happened to die that day and you happened to walk with your saddle so you arrived just when you did and we had brake trouble so we arrived when *we* did and you just happened to be the first person in years that Ollie's cared for and Katie just happened to take a liking to you. Pure chance."

"I wouldn't set much store on Katie taking a liking to me," said Deaver. "I don't think there's much in it."

Scarlett looked at him with deep-welling eyes and spoke with well-crafted fervor. "Save us. We don't have the strength to save ourselves."

Deaver didn't know what to say. Just shook his head and moved away,

out into the grass away from the truck, away from everybody. He could see them all—the crowd out front, the Aals working behind the truck, getting makeup on, setting up the props so they'd be ready to take onstage when they were needed. He walked a little farther away, and everybody got smaller.

If the crowd kept coming like this, there'd be hundreds of people by showtime. Everybody in town, probably. Pageant wagons didn't come through all that often.

The sun was still up, though, and people were still arriving, so Deaver figured he could take a minute to walk off by himself and think. Old Donna was crazy as a loon, calling him an angel. And Scarlett, asking him to somehow stop Ollie from wrecking them. And Katie, wanting whatever it was she wanted.

He only met these people last night. Not twenty-four hours ago. And yet he'd seen them so close and so clear that he felt like he knew them. Could they possibly also know *him*?

No, they were desperate, that's all it was. Wanting to change and using the first person who came along to help them do it. What Deaver couldn't understand was why they wanted to keep up their show-gypsy life in the first place. It wasn't much of a life, as far as Deaver could see. Working too hard, just to put on shows in towns that hated them.

Katie, what do you want?

She was probably part of this conspiracy of women—Scarlett, Donna, and Katie, all trying to get Deaver to stay in hopes he could make things better for them. The worst thing was he halfway wanted to stay. Even knowing Katie was faking it, he still was drawn to her, still couldn't keep his eyes off her without trying. What was it Meech said when a guy left the rangers to marry some woman? "Testosterone poisoning," that's what he called it. "Man gets sick with testosterone poisoning, that's the one disease takes you out of the rangers for good." Well, I got that disease, and if I wanted to I could plain forget everything else except Katie, at least for a while, long enough to wake up and find myself stuck here with a wife and babies and then I'd never go even if I wanted to, even if I found out Katie was play-acting all the time and never really wanted me at all—I'd never go because I'm no Royal Aal, I'm no foster father. If I ever got me a family I'd never leave my kids, never. They could count on me till I was dead.

Which is why I can't stay, I can't let myself believe any of this or even care about it. They're actors, and I'm not an actor, and I could no more be a part of them than I could be a part of Hatchville not being a Mormon. And as for Katie, I know better than to think a woman like that could ever love me. I'm a fool for even thinking about staying. They're all so unhappy, I'd just be guaranteeing myself as much misery as they've got.

My life's work is out on the prairie with the outriders. Even if Royal Aal is a gold-plated turd, even if I didn't fit in there, either, at least I'd be doing a work that made some difference in the world.

Deaver wound up in the apple orchard about a hundred yards south of the truck. Hatchville was enough years back from the fringe that the trees were big and solid enough to climb. He swung up into a branch. He watched the crowd still coming. It was getting late. The sun was about touching the mountains to the west. He could hear Katie's voice calling, "Ollie!"

Like hide and seek the neighborhood kids played when Deaver was little. Ollie ollie oxen free. Deaver was a champion hider. He heard that call more than once.

Then Toolie's voice. And Marshall's. "Ollie!"

Deaver imagined what would happen if Ollie just didn't come back. If he ran off like Royal did. What would the family do? They couldn't run the show without somebody running lights and firing off the electrical effects. Everybody else was on stage but Ollie.

Then Deaver got a sickening jolt in the pit of his stomach. There *was* one other person who knew something about the lighting and wasn't on stage. Can you help us, Deaver Teague? What would he say then? No, sorry, I got grass to tend, good luck and goodbye.

Hell, he couldn't say no and walk off like that, and Ollie knew it. Ollie sized him up right off, pegged him for the kind of guy who couldn't just go off and leave people in the lurch. That's why he made such a point of teaching Deaver how the lighting system worked. So Ollie could run off without destroying the family. And here everybody thought Ollie had chosen Deaver as a *friend*. No sir, Deaver Teague wasn't Ollie's friend, he was Ollie's patsy.

But he had to give Ollie some credit here. Scarlett was wrong about him—Ollie wasn't the kind just to run away like Royal did, and to hell with the family and the show. No, Ollie waited till he had a half-likely replacement before he took off. Too bad if Deaver didn't particularly *want* to run lights for the Aal family show—that wasn't Ollie's problem. What did he care about Deaver Teague? Deaver wasn't one of the family, he was an outsider, it was all right to screw around with *his* life because he didn't amount to anything anyway. After all, Deaver didn't have any family or any connections. What did *he* matter, as long as Ollie's family was all right?

Even though Deaver was burning, he couldn't help imagining Katie coming to him, frantic—no actress stuff now, she'd really be upset—saying, "What'll we do? We can't do the show without somebody running lights." And Deaver'd say, "I'll do it." She'd say, "But you don't know the changes, Deaver." And Deaver'd say, "Give me a script, write them down. I can

do it. Whoever isn't on stage can help me." And then her lips on his, her body pressed up against him after the show, and then her sweet hot breath against his cheek as she murmured, "Oh, thank you, Deaver. You saved us."

"Don't *do* that." It was a girl's voice that snapped Deaver out of his imagination. Not Katie's voice. Behind him and to the north, deeper in the orchard.

"Don't *do* that." A man's voice, mocking. Deaver turned to look. In the reddish light of sunset, he could see Ollie and a girl from Hatchville. She was giggling. He was kissing her neck and had both hands on her buttocks, gripping so tight she was standing on tiptoes. Not very far away from Deaver at all. Deaver kept *his* mouth shut, but he was thinking, Ollie didn't run off after all. What he couldn't decide was whether he was glad of it or ticked off about it.

"You can't," said the girl. She tore away from him, ran a few steps, then stopped and turned back. Plainly she wanted him to follow her.

"You're right, I can't," said Ollie. "Time for the show. But when it's over, you'll be there, won't you?"

"Of course. I'm going to watch it all."

Suddenly Ollie got all serious-looking. "Nance," he said. "You don't know how much you mean to me."

"You just only met me a few minutes ago."

"I feel like I've known you so long. I feel like—I feel like I've been lonely for you my whole life and didn't know it till now."

She liked that. She smiled and looked down, looked away. Deaver thought: Ollie's as much of an actor as anybody else in the Aal family. I ought to be taking notes on how to seduce a Mormon girl.

"I know it's right between us," said Ollie. "I know—you don't have to believe me, I can hardly believe it myself—but I know we were *meant* to find each other. Like this. Tonight."

Then Ollie reached out his hand. She tentatively put her hand in his. Slowly he raised her hand to his lips, kissed her fingers gently one by one. She put a finger of the other hand in her mouth, watching him intently.

Still holding her hand, he reached out and caressed her cheek with his other hand, just the backs of his fingers brushing her skin, her lips. His hand drifted down her neck, then behind, under her hair. He drew her close; her body moved, leaning toward him; he took a single step and kissed her. It was like Ollie had every step planned. Every move, every word. He'd probably done it a hundred times before, thought Deaver. No wonder the Aals were implicated in a lot of ugly stories.

She clung to him. Melted against him. It made Deaver angry and wistful both at once, knowing what he was seeing wasn't right, that Ollie

was fooling with a girl who believed all this stuff, that if he got caught he could cost his family their license to put on shows; yet at the same time wishing it was him, wishing to have such lips kissing him, such a sweet and fragile body clinging to him. It was enough to make a man crazy, watching that scene.

"Better go," Ollie said. "You first. Your folks would just get mad and not let you see me again if they saw us come out of the orchard together."

"I don't care, I'd see you anyway. I'd come to you at night, I'd climb right out my window and find you, right here in the orchard, I'd be waiting for you."

"Just go on ahead, Nance."

Far away: "Ollie!"

"Hurry up, Nance, they're calling me."

She backed away from him, slow, careful, like Ollie was holding her with invisible wires. Then she turned and ran, straight west, so she'd come up to the audience from the south.

Ollie watched her for a minute. Then he turned squarely toward Deaver and looked him in the eye. "Got a cute little ass on her, don't you think, Deaver?" he asked.

Deaver felt sick with fear. He just couldn't think what he was afraid of. Like playing hide-and-seek, when somebody you hadn't heard coming suddenly says, I see Deaver!

"I can feel you condemning me, Deaver Teague," said Ollie. "But you've got to admit I'm good at it. You could never do it like that. And that's what Katie needs. Smooth. Gentle. Saying the right thing. You'd just make a fool of yourself trying. You aren't fine enough for Katie."

Ollie said it so sad that Deaver couldn't help believing it, at least partly. Because Ollie *was* right. Katie could never really be happy with somebody like him. A scavenger, a range rider. For a moment Deaver felt anger flare inside him. But that was what Ollie wanted. If somebody lost his head here, it wouldn't be Deaver Teague.

"At least I know the difference between a woman and a cute little ass," said Deaver.

"I've read all the science books, Deaver, and I know the facts. Women are just bellies waiting to get filled up with babies, and they pump our handles whenever they get to feeling empty. All that other stuff about true love and devotion and commitment and fatherhood, that's all a bunch of lies we tell each other, so we don't have to admit that we're no different from dogs—except our bitches are in heat all the time."

Deaver was just angry enough to say the cruelest thing that came to mind. "That's just a story, too, Ollie. Fact is the only way you ever get to pretend you're a real man is by telling lies to little girls. A real woman would see right through you."

Ollie turned red. "I know what you're trying to do, Deaver Teague. You're trying to take my place in this family. I'll kill you first!"

Deaver couldn't help it—he busted out laughing.

"I could do it!"

"Oh, sure, I wasn't laughing at the idea of you killing me. I was laughing at the idea of me taking your place."

"You think I didn't notice how you tried to learn my whole job today? The way you had Katie hanging all over you? Well I *belong* in this family, and you don't!"

Ollie turned and started to walk away. Deaver dropped out of the tree and caught up to him in a few strides. He put his hand on Ollie's shoulder, just to stop him, but Ollie came around swinging. Deaver ducked inside the blow, so Ollie's arm caught him alongside the ear. It stung, but Deaver'd been in some good hard fights in his time, and he could take a half-assed blow like that without blinking. In a second he had Ollie pressed up against an apple tree, Deaver's right hand holding Ollie up by his shirt, his left hand clutching the crotch of Ollie's pants. The fear in Ollie's face was plain, but Deaver didn't plan to hurt him.

"Listen to me, fool," said Deaver. "I don't want to take your place. I got me a chance to apply to Royal's Riders, so what in hell makes you think I want to sit and run your damn fool dimmer switches? *You* were the one teaching *me*."

"Hell I was."

"Hell you *were*, Ollie, you're just too dumb to know what you're doing. Let me tell you something. I'm not taking your place. I don't *want* your stupid place. I don't want to marry Katie, I don't want to run the lights, and I don't want to stay with your family one second after we reach Moab."

"Let me down."

Deaver ground his left hand upward into Ollie's crotch. Ollie's eyes got wide, but he was listening. "If you want to leave your family, that's fine by me, but don't do it by sneaking away and trying to stick me with your job. And don't do it by poking dumb little girls till their folks get your family's license pulled. However much you want to get away, you got no right to destroy your own people in order to do it. When you walk out, you walk out clean, you understand me?"

"You don't know me or anything about me, Deaver Teague!"

"Just remember, Ollie. For the next couple days till we get to Moab, I'm on you like flies on shit. Don't touch a girl, don't talk to a girl, don't even look at a girl here in Hatchville or I'll break more ribs on you than you thought you had, do you understand me?"

"What's it to you, Teague?"

"They're your family, you dumb little dickhead. Even dogs don't piss on their own family."

He let Ollie slide down the tree till he was standing on the ground, then let go of his pants and his shirt and stepped back a safe distance. Ollie didn't try anything though. Katie was still calling "Ollie! Ollie!" He just stood there, looking at Deaver, and then got his little half-smile, turned around, and walked out of the orchard, straight toward the pageant wagon. Deaver stood there and watched him go.

Deaver felt all jumpy and tingly, like all his muscles had to move but he couldn't think what he should do with them. That was the closest Deaver'd come to really tearing into somebody since he was in his teens. He'd always kept his anger under control, but it felt good to have Ollie pressed up against that tree, and he wanted so bad to hit him, again and again, to pound some sense into his stupid selfish head. Only that wasn't it, after all, because he was already ashamed of letting himself go so far. *I was being a stupid kid, making threats, pushing Ollie around. He was right—what's it to me? It's none of my business.*

But now I've made it my business. Without even meaning to, I've got myself caught up in this family's problems.

Deaver looked over toward the pageant wagon, silhouetted in the last light of dusk in the western sky. Just then the generator kicked on, and bank by bank the fresnels and ellipsoidals lit up, making a dazzling halo around the pageant wagon, so it looked almost magical. He could hear the audience clapping at the sight of the stage, now brightly lit.

The backstage worklights had also come on, and now in that dimmer light he could make out people moving around, and seeing them, grey shadows moving back and forth on business he didn't understand, he felt a sweet pain in his chest, a hot pressure behind his eyes. A longing for something long ago, something he used to have. So long lost that he could never name it; so deeply rooted that it would always grow in him. They had it, those men and women and children moving in silent business behind the truck, hooded lights glowing in the dusk. It was there in the taut lines that connected them together, a web that wound tighter, binding them with every pass. Every blow they struck, every tender caress, every embrace, every backhanded shove as they ran from each other, all left still another fine invisible wire like a spider's thread, until the people could hardly be understood as individuals at all. There was no Katie, but Katie-with-Toolie and Katie-with-Scarlett; there was no Marshall, but Marshall-with-Scarlett and Marshall-with-Toolie and Marshall-with-Ollie and Marshall-with-Parley and above all Marshall-with-Roy. Roy who had hacked at those lines, cut them—he thought. Roy who went away never to return—he thought—but still the lines are there, still

each move he makes causes tremors in his brother's life, and through him in all their lives, all the intersections of the web.

I've been caught in this net, too, and every tug and jiggle of their web vibrates in me.

A fanfare of music came over the loudspeakers. Deaver ducked under a branch and walked across the field toward the truck.

The music was loud, almost painful. An anthem—bugles, drums. Deaver came around the truck partway, well back from the lights, till he could see that Katie was onstage, sewing with big movements, so even the farthest audience member could see her hand move. What was she sewing? A flag.

The music suddenly became quieter. From his angle, Deaver couldn't see, but he knew the voice. Dusty, saying, "General Washington has to know—is the flag ready, Mrs. Ross?"

"Tell the general that my fingers are no faster than his soldiers," Katie said.

Dusty stepped forward, facing the audience; now Deaver could see him, right up to the front of the truck. "We must have the flag, Betsy Ross! So every man can see it waving high, so every man will know that his nation is not Pennsylvania, not Carolina, not New York or Massachusetts, but America!"

Suddenly Deaver realized that this speech was surely written for Washington—for Parley. It was only given to Dusty, as a young soldier, because of Parley's failing memory. A compromise; but did the audience know?

"A flag that will stand forever, and what we do in this dark war will decide what the flag means, and the acts of each new generation of Americans will add new stories to the flag, new honor and new glory. Betsy Ross, where is that flag!"

Katie rose to her feet in a smooth, swift motion, and in a single stride she stood at the front, the flag draped across her body in vivid red and white and blue. It was a thrilling movement, and for a moment Deaver was overcome with his feelings—not for Katie, but Betsy Ross, for Dusty's fervent young voice, for the situation, the words, and the bitter knowledge that America was, after all, gone.

Then he remembered that he was supposed to be backstage, ready to raise the flag when Katie was finished with the very speech she was beginning now. He was surely too late; he ran anyway.

Janie was at the lever; not far away, Parley, in his full George Washington regalia, was standing behind the pyramid, ready to enter and deliver his speech to the soldiers. Onstage, Katie was saying her last few words: "If your men are brave enough, then this flag will ever wave—"

Deaver reached up and took the lever in his hand. Janie didn't even look at him; she immediately removed her hand, snatched up a script,

and scrambled up the ladder to a position halfway up the back of the pyramid.

"O'er the land of the free!" cried Katie.

Deaver pulled the lever. It released the weight at the top of the flagpole; the weight plummeted, and the flag rose swiftly up the pole. Immediately Deaver grabbed the wire that was strung around the other side of the truck, invisibly attached to the outside top of the flag; by pulling and releasing the wire, he made the flag seem to wave. The music reached a climax, then fell away again. Deaver couldn't see the flag from where he was, but he remembered the cue and assumed the lights were dimmed on the flag by now. He stopped the waving.

Janie wasn't helping Dusty with a costume change at all, though that was the original reason why they asked Deaver to run the flag effect. Dusty had run straight back to the tent, and Janie was halfway up the pyramid, prompting Parley in Washington's speech to the troops. She did a good job; Parley's fumbling for his lines probably seemed to the audience to be nothing but Washington searching for just the right word to say. Yet Deaver knew that Parley botched the speech, leaving out a whole section despite Janie's prompting.

The speech ended. Parley came down in the darkness. Onstage Toolie was playing Joseph Smith and Scarlett was playing his mother. Marshall moved through the darkness wearing brilliant white that caught every scrap of light that reached him; he was going to appear as the angel Moroni. Parley came down the steps and turned, a few steps toward Deaver, into the darkest shadow. He bent over, resting his head and hands against the edge of the stage, the edge of the flatbed truck. Deaver watched him for a while, fascinated, knowing that Parley was crying, unable to bear knowing it. A man shouldn't have to wait until he wasn't any good before he retired. He should be able to quit while he still has some fresh accomplishment in him. But this—to have to stay on and on, failing again every night.

Deaver didn't dare speak to him; had he and Parley even spoken yet? He couldn't remember. What was Parley to him? An old man, a stranger. Deaver took a step toward him, another, reached out his hand, rested it on Parley's shoulder. Parley didn't move, not to move away, not to show a sign that he felt the hand and accepted it. After a while, Deaver took his hand away and went back around the truck to watch the show from the side, where he'd been before.

It took a while to get back into the pageant, to follow what was happening. Dusty was onstage in blackface, to be the slave that Lincoln freed; Marshall made an imposing Lincoln, fine to look at. But Deaver also kept looking at the audience. He'd never watched a crowd like that before. The sun was long gone, the sky black, so all he could see was the

people in front, where the light from the stage spilled back onto their faces. Mouths open, they watched the stage, unmoving, as if they were machines waiting for someone to switch them on. And now, onstage, Lincoln's hand reached out to the young slave and lifted him up out of bondage. "O happy day!" cried Dusty. The music picked up the refrain. O happy day. The Tabernacle Choir singing it.

Then Lincoln reached out both his arms to embrace the boy, and Dusty impulsively jumped up and hugged Lincoln around the neck. The audience roared with laughter; Deaver saw how, almost with one movement, their heads rocked back, then forward again; they stirred in their seats, then settled. The comic moment had released the tension of their stillness. They relaxed again. Then burst into applause at something they saw; Deaver didn't even bother looking at the stage to see what it was. The audience itself was a performance. Moving, shifting, laughing, clapping, all as one, as if they were all part of the same soul.

Toolie played Brigham Young as he led the Saints across the plains to Utah. Deaver vaguely remembered that the settlement of Utah was before the Civil War, but it didn't seem to matter—it worked fine this way in the show. To Deaver it seemed a little strange that a show called *Glory of America* should have an equal mix of Mormon and American history. But to these people, he realized, it was all the same story. George Washington, Betsy Ross, Joseph Smith, Abraham Lincoln, Brigham Young, all part of the same unfolding tale. Their own past.

After a while, though, he lost interest in the audience. They only did the same things—hold still, rapt; laugh; clap; gasp in awe at some spectacle. Only a limited sort of entertainment for someone watching them. Deaver turned back and watched the stage again.

It was time for the rocket. Even though it actually looked like a missile, and nothing at all like the Apollo launches, it was still something to watch Marshall put the helmet over his head and climb into the missile. All wrong—one man, not three, and riding in the rocket itself. Every school in Deseret taught better than that. But everyone understood. There was no way to put a fullsize Saturn rocket on the back of a pageant truck. What mattered was that it was a rocket with the letters NASA and USA on it, and the man getting in was supposed to be Neil Armstrong. A large puff of smoke represented the launch. Then the door opened again, Marshall came out; the music was soft, a high, thrilling violin. He opened the rigid American flag on its little stand and placed it on the ground in front of him. "A small step for a man," he said. "A giant leap for mankind."

The music reached a towering climax. Deaver's eyes filled with tears. This was the moment, America's climax, the supreme achievement, the highwater mark, and no one knew it at the time. Couldn't those people

back in 1969 see the cracks, feel the crumbling all around them? Not thirty years later it was all gone. NASA, the USA itself, all gone, all broken up. Only the Indians to the south were making nations anymore, calling themselves Americans, saying that the white people of North America were Europeans, trespassers—and who could tell them no? America was over. It grew two hundred years, feeding and devouring the world, even reaching out to touch the moon, and now the name was up for grabs. Nothing left but scraps and fragments.

Yet we were there. That little flag was on the moon, the footprints unstirred by any wind.

Only gradually did Deaver realize that these things he was thinking were all being spoken; he heard the whispered words in the trembling voice of Scarlett Aal. "The footprints still are there, and if we go back, we will recognize them as our own."

Deaver glanced at the audience again. More than one hand was brushing a tear away. Just as Deaver's own hand went up to his cheek.

Now the collapse. Cacophonous music. Parley as the evil Soviet tyrant, Marshall as the bumbling fool of a President, together they mimed the blundering that led to war. Deaver couldn't believe at first that the Aals had chosen to show the end of the world as a comic dance. But it was irresistibly funny. The audience screamed with laughter as the Soviet tyrant kept stomping on the President's feet, and the President kept bowing and apologizing, picking up his own injured foot and hitting it himself, finally shaking hands with the Russian, as if making a formal agreement, and then stomping on his own foot. Every mimed cry of pain brought another roar of laughter from the crowd. This was their own destruction being acted out, and yet Deaver couldn't keep himself from laughing. Again he was wiping away tears, but this time so that he could see the stage at all through the blur of his own laughter.

The Russian knocked off the President's hat. When the President bent over to pick it up, the Russian kicked him hard in the behind and the President sprawled on the stage. Then Parley beckoned Dusty and Janie, dressed as Russian soldiers, to come over and finish him off.

Suddenly it wasn't funny anymore. They both held submachine guns, and jammed the butts again and again into the President's body. Even though Deaver knew that the blows were being faked, he still felt them like blows to his own body, terrible pain, brutal, unfair, and it went on and on, blow after blow after blow.

The crowd was silent now. Deaver felt what they all felt. It has to stop. Stop it now. I can't bear anymore.

At the moment when he was about to turn away, a drum roll began. Toolie entered, and to Deaver's astonishment he was dressed as Royal Aal. The plaid shirt, two pistols in his belt, the grizzled beard—there

was no mistaking it. The audience recognized him at once, and immediately cheered. Cheered and leapt to their feet, clapping, waving their arms. "Royal! Royal! Royal!" they shouted.

Toolie strode down to where the Russian soldiers were still pounding the corpse of the President. With both hands he thrust them apart, knocking them down. Then he reached down to the President's body—to lift him up? No. To draw out of his costume the gold and green beehive flag of Deseret. The cheers grew louder. He carried it to the flagpole, fastened it where the American flag had been. This time the flag rose slowly; the anthem of Deseret began to play. Anyone who wasn't standing stood now, and the crowd sang along with the music, more and more voices, spontaneously becoming part of the show.

As they sang, the flag of Deseret suddenly flowed outward, disappearing, as the American flag moved in behind it. Then the American flag flowed out and the flag of Deseret replaced it. Again and again, over and over, the flags changing. Even though Deaver had helped Katie set up the effect and knew exactly how it was done, he couldn't keep himself from being caught up in the emotion of the moment. He even sang with all the others as they reached the final chorus. "We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of heaven! Hosanna! Hosanna to God and the King! Let glory to them in the highest be given, henceforth and forever, amen and amen!"

The lights went out on the stage; only a single spot remained on the flag, which had come to rest as the old American flag. It could have been the end of the show right there. But no. A single spotlight now on stage. Katie came out, dressed as Betsy Ross. "Does it still wave?" she asked, looking around.

"Yes!" cried the audience.

"Where does it wave!" she cried. "Where is it!"

Marshall, now dressed in a suit and tie, wearing a mask that made him look pretty much like Governor Monson, strode into the light.

"O'er the land of the free!" he cried.

The audience cheered.

Toolie, still dressed as Royal Aal, stepped into the light from the other side.

"And the home of the brave!"

The music immediately went into "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the lights went out completely. The audience shouted and cheered. Deaver clapped until his palms stung and kept on beating his hands together until they finally ached and throbbed. His voice was lost in the crowd's shouting—no, rather the crowd's voice became his own, the loudest shout he had ever uttered in his life. It seemed to last forever, one great voice, one single cry of joy and pride, one soul, one great indivisible self.

Then the shouting faded, the clapping became more scattered. The faint audience lights came on. A few voices, talking, began among the crowd. The applause was over. The unity was broken. The audience was once again the thousand citizens of Hatchville. Little children were gathered up in their parents' arms. Families moved off together into the darkness, many of them lighting lanterns they had brought with them for the trek home in the night. Deaver saw one man he recognized, though he couldn't think why; the man was smiling, gathering his young daughter into his arms, putting his arm around his wife, a little boy chattering words that Deaver couldn't hear—but all of them smiling, happy, *full*. Then he realized who the man was. The secretary from the mayor's office. Deaver hadn't recognized him at first because of that smile. It was like he was someone else. Like the show had changed him.

Suddenly Deaver realized something. During the show, when Deaver felt himself to be part of that audience, like their laughter was his laughter, their tears his tears—the secretary was part of that audience, too. For a while tonight they saw and heard and felt the same things. And now they'd carry away the same memories, which meant that to some degree they were the same person. One.

The idea left Deaver breathless. It wasn't just him and the secretary, it was also the children, everybody there. All the same person, in some hidden corner of their memory.

Once again Deaver was alone on the boundary between the pageant wagon and the town, belonging to neither—yet now, because of the show, belonging a little bit to both.

Out in the crowd, Ollie stood up from behind the light and sound control panel. The girl from the orchard—Nance?—was standing by him. It made Deaver sad to see her, sad to think that she would translate all those powerful feelings of the pageant into a passion for Ollie. But there was nothing to worry about. The girl's father was right there with her, pulling her away. The town had been warned, and Ollie wasn't going to have his way tonight.

Deaver walked around behind the truck. He was still emotionally drained. Toolie had the door of the truck open and was peeling off his beard and putting it in its box by the light from the cab. "Like it?" he asked Deaver.

"Yeah," Deaver said. His voice was husky from yelling.

Toolie looked up, studied his face for a moment. "Hey," he said. "I'm glad."

"Where are the others?"

"In the tents, changing. I stay out here to make sure nothing walks away from the truck. Ollie watches out front."

Deaver didn't believe anyone would steal from the people who brought

them such a show as this. But he didn't say so. "I can keep watch," he said. "Go in and change."

"Thanks," Toolie said. He immediately closed the box, shut the cab door, and jogged off to the tent.

Deaver walked out into the space between the tents and the truck. Because he was supposed to be keeping watch, he faced the truck, scanning across it. But his mind was on the people in the tents behind him. He could hear them talking, sometimes laughing. Did they know what they had done to him?

I was on both sides of this tonight, thought Deaver. I saw it, I was in the audience. But I also raised the flag the first time, made it wave. I was part of it. Part of every part. I'm one of you. For one hour tonight I'm one of you.

Katie came out of the girls' tent, looked around, walked over to Deaver. "Silly, wasn't it?"

It took a second before Deaver realized that she was talking about the show.

"Of course the history in it is pure nonsense," said Katie, "and there isn't a genuine character in the whole thing. It isn't like real acting. Watching that show, you wouldn't think any of us had any talent at all." She sounded angry, bitter. Hadn't she heard the crowd? Didn't she understand what the show had done to them? To *him*?

She was looking at him, and now she finally realized that his silence didn't mean he agreed with her at all. "Why, you liked it, didn't you," she said.

"Yes," he answered.

She took a little step backward. "I'm sorry. I forgot that you—I guess you haven't seen many shows."

"It wasn't silly."

"Well, it is, you know. When you've done it over and over again like we have. It's like saying the same word again and again until it doesn't mean anything anymore."

"It meant something."

"Not to me."

"Yes it did. There at the end. When you said—"

"When I said my *lines*. They were memorized speeches. Father wrote them, and I said them, but it wasn't *me* saying it. It was Betsy Ross. Deaver, I'm glad you liked the show, and I'm sorry I disillusioned you. I'm not used to having audience backstage." She turned away.

"No," Deaver said.

She stopped, waited for him to say more. But he didn't know what to say. Just that she was wrong.

She turned around. "Well?"

He thought of how she was this morning, coming so close to him, holding on to him. How she went back and forth between real and fake, so smooth he could hardly tell the difference. But there was a difference. Talking about Katharine Hepburn, saying how she loved that movie, that was real. Flirting with him, that was fake. And tonight, talking about the show being silly, that was phony, that was just an attitude she was putting on. But her anger, that was real.

"Why are you mad at me?"

"I'm not."

"All I did was like the show," said Deaver. "What was so wrong about that?"

"Nothing."

He just stood there, not taking the lie for an answer. His silence was too demanding a question for her to ignore.

"I guess I was the one who was disillusioned," said Katie. "I thought you were too smart to be taken in by the show. I thought you'd see it for what it really is."

"I did."

"You saw Betsy Ross and George Washington and Neil Armstrong and—"

"Didn't you?"

"I saw a stage and actors and makeup and set pieces and costumes and special effects. I saw lines getting dropped and a flag that went up a little bit too late. And I heard speeches that no real human being would ever say, a bunch of high-flown words that mean nothing at all. In other words, Deaver, I saw the truth, and not the illusion."

"Bullshit."

The word stung her. Her face set hard, and she turned to go.

Deaver reached out and caught her arm, pulled her back. "I said bullshit, Katie, and you know it."

She tried to wrench her arm away.

"I saw all those things too, you know," said Deaver. "The screwed-up lines and the costumes and all that. I was backstage, too. But I guess I saw something you didn't see."

"It's the first show you ever watched, Deaver, and you saw something I didn't?"

"I saw you take an audience and turn them into one person, with one soul."

"These townies are all alike anyway."

"Me too? I'm just like them? Is that what you're saying? Then why've you been trying so hard to make me fall in love with you? If you think I'm one of them and you think this show isn't worth doing, then why have you been trying so hard to get me to stay?"

Her eyes widened in surprise, and then a grin spread across her face. "Why, Deaver Teague, you're smarter than I thought. And dumber, too. I wasn't trying to get you to stay. I was trying to get you to take me with you when you left."

Partly he was angry because she was laughing at him. Partly he was angry because he didn't want it to be true that she was just using him, that she wasn't attracted to him at all. Partly he was angry because the show had moved him and she despised him for it. Mostly, though, he was so full of emotion that it had to spill out somehow, and anger would do.

"Then what?" he demanded. He talked low, so that the others wouldn't hear him in the tents. "Suppose I fell in love with you and took you with me, then what? Did you plan to marry me and be a range rider's wife and have my babies? Not you, Katie. No, you were going to get me hooked on you and then you were going to find some theater somewhere so you could play all those Shakespeare parts you wanted, and if that meant me giving up my dream of being an outrider, why, that was fine with you, wasn't it, because it doesn't matter to you what *I* sacrificed, as long as you got what you wanted."

"Shut up," she whispered.

"And what about your family? What kind of show can they do if you walk out? You think Janie can step in and do your parts? Is the old lady going to come back on stage so you can run away?"

To his surprise, she was crying. "What about me, then? Doing these stupid little backwater shows all my life—am I supposed to be trapped here forever just because *they* need *me*? Don't I get to need anything? Can't I ever do anything with my life that's worth doing?"

"But *this* show is worth doing."

"This show is worthless!"

"You know who goes to plays in Zarahemla? All the big shots, the people who work in clean shirts all day. Is that who you want to do plays for? What difference is your acting going to make in their lives? But these people here, what is their life except rain and mud and lousy little problems and jobs always needing to get done and not enough people to do them. And then they come here and see your show, and they think—hey, I'm part of something bigger than this place, bigger than Hatchville, bigger than the whole fringe. I know they're thinking that, because *I* was thinking that, do you understand me, Katie? Riding the range and checking the grass, all by myself out there, I thought I was worthless to everybody, but tonight it went through my head—just for a minute, it came to my mind that I was part of something, and that whatever it was I was part of, it was pretty fine. Now maybe that's worthless to you, maybe that's *silly*. But I think it's worth a hell of a lot more than going to Zarahemla and play-acting the part of Titanic."

"Titania," she whispered. "The Titanic was a boat that sank."

He was shaking, he was so angry and frustrated. This was why he gave up years ago trying to talk about anything important to people—they never listened, never understood a thing he said. "You don't know what's real and you don't know what matters."

"And you do?"

"Better than you."

She slapped his face. Good and sharp and hard, and it stung like hell. "That was real," she said.

He grabbed her shoulders, meaning to shake her, but instead his fingers got tangled up in her hair and he found himself holding onto her and pulling her close and then he did what he really wanted to do, what he'd been wanting to do ever since he woke up and found her sitting beside him in the cab of the truck. He kissed her, hard and long, holding her so close he could feel every part of her body pressed against his own. And then he was done kissing her. He relaxed his hold on her and she slipped down and away from him a little, so he could look down and see her face right there in front of him. "*That* was real," he said.

"Everything always comes down to sex and violence," she murmured.

She was making a joke about it. It made him feel sick. He let go of her, took his hands off her completely. "It was real to *me*. It mattered to *me*. But you've been faking it all day, it didn't matter to you a bit, and I think that stinks. I think that makes you a liar. And you know what else? You don't deserve to be in this show. You aren't good enough."

He didn't want to hear her answer. He didn't want anything more to do with her. He felt ashamed of having shown her how he felt about her, about the show, about anything. So many years he'd kept to himself, never getting close to anybody, never talking about anything he really cared about, and now when he finally blurted out something that mattered to him, it was to *her*.

He turned his back on her and walked away, heading around the truck. Now that he wasn't so close to her, paying so much attention, he realized that there were other people talking. Sound carried pretty good tonight in the clear dry air. Probably everybody in the tents heard their whole conversation. Probably they were all peeking out to watch. No humiliation was complete without witnesses.

Some of the talking, though, got louder as he rounded the back of the truck. It was Marshall and somebody else out by the light and sound control panel. Ollie? No, a stranger. Deaver walked on over, even though he didn't feel like talking to anybody, because he had a feeling that whatever was going on, it wasn't good.

"I can be back with a warrant in ten minutes and then I'll find out

whether she's here or not," said the man, "but the judge won't like having to make one out this time of night, and he might not be so easy on you."

It was the sheriff. It didn't take Deaver long to guess that Ollie'd got himself caught doing something stupid. But no, that couldn't be, or the sheriff wouldn't need a warrant. A warrant meant searching for something. Or somebody. Whatever was happening, it meant Deaver hadn't stayed on Ollie tight enough. Hadn't the girl said something about meeting him after the show, even if she had to sneak out of her window to do it? He should have remembered before. He shouldn't have let his eyes off Ollie. It was all Deaver's fault.

"Who you looking for, sheriff?" Deaver asked.

"None of your problem, Deaver," said Marshall.

"This your son?" asked the sheriff.

"He's a range rider," said Marshall. "We gave him a ride and he's been helping out a little."

"You seen a girl around here?" asked the sheriff. "About this high, name of Nancy Pulley. She was seen talking to your light man after the show."

"I saw a girl talking to Ollie," said Deaver. "Right after the show, but it looked to me like her father pulled her away."

"Yeah, well, could be, but she isn't home right now and we're pretty sure she meant to come back here and meet somebody."

Marshall stepped in between Deaver and the sheriff. "All our people are here, and there aren't any outsiders."

"Then why don't you just let me go in and check, if you got nothing to hide?"

Of course Deaver knew why. Ollie must be missing. It was too late to go find him before trouble started.

"We have a right to be protected against unreasonable searches, sir," said Marshall. He would've gone on, no doubt, but Deaver cut him off by asking the sheriff a question.

"Sheriff, the show's only been over about fifteen minutes," said Deaver. "How do you know she isn't off with some girlfriend or something? Have you been checking their houses?"

"Look, smart boy," said the sheriff, "I don't need you telling me my business."

"Well, I guess not. I think you know your business real good," said Deaver. "In fact, I think you know your business so good that you *know* this girl wouldn't be off with a girlfriend. I bet this girl has caused you a lot of trouble before."

"That's none of your business, range rider."

"I'm just saying that—"

But now Marshall had caught the drift of what Deaver was doing, and

he took over. "I am alarmed, sir, that there might be a chance that this girl from your town is corrupting one of my sons. My sons have little opportunity to associate with young people outside our family, and it may be that an *experienced* girl might lead one of them astray."

"Real smart," said the sheriff, glaring at Marshall and then at Deaver and then at Marshall again. "But it isn't going to work."

"I don't know what you mean," said Marshall. "I only know that you were aware that this girl was prone to illicit involvement with members of the opposite sex, and yet you made no effort to protect guests in your town from getting involved with her."

"You can just forget that as a line of defense in court," said the sheriff.

"And why is that?" asked Marshall.

"Because her father's the judge, Mr. Aal. You start talking like that, and you've lost your license in a hot second. You might get it back on appeal, but with Judge Pulley fighting you every step of the way, you aren't going to be working for months."

Deaver couldn't think of anything to say. To Deaver's surprise, neither could Marshall.

"So I'm coming back in ten minutes with a warrant, and you better have all your boys here in camp, and no girls with them, or your days of spreading corruption through the fringe are over."

The sheriff walked a few paces toward the road, then turned back and said, "I'm going to call the judge on my radio, and then I'll be sitting right here in my car watching your camp till the judge gets here with the warrant. I don't want to miss a thing."

"Of course not, you officious cretin," said Marshall. But he said it real quiet, and Deaver was the only one who heard him.

It was plain what the sheriff planned. He was hoping to catch Nancy Pulley running away from the camp, or Ollie sneaking back.

"Marshall," said Deaver, as quiet as he could, "I saw Ollie with that girl in the orchard before the show."

"I'm not surprised," said Marshall.

"I take it Ollie isn't in camp."

"I haven't checked," said Marshall.

"But you figure he's gone."

Marshall didn't say anything. Wasn't about to admit anything to an outsider, Deaver figured. Well, that was proper. When the family's in trouble, you got to be careful about trusting strangers.

"I'll do what I can," said Deaver.

"Thanks," said Marshall. It was more than Deaver expected him to say. Maybe Marshall understood that things were bigger than Marshall could handle just by telling people off.

Deaver walked along after the sheriff, and came up to him just as he

was setting down his radio mouthpiece. The sheriff looked up at him, already looking for a quarrel. "What is it, range rider?"

"My name's Deaver Teague, Sheriff, and I've only been with the Aals since this morning, when they picked me up. But that was long enough to get to know them a little, and I got to tell you, I think they're pretty good people."

"They're all actors, son. That means they can *seem* to be anything they want."

"Yeah, they're pretty good actors, aren't they. That was some show, wasn't it."

The sheriff smiled. "I never said they weren't *good* actors."

Deaver smiled back. "They *are* good. I helped them set up today. They work real hard to put on that show. Did you ever try to lift a generator? Or put up those lights? Getting from a loaded truck to a show tonight—they put in an honest day's work."

"Are you getting somewhere with this?" asked the sheriff.

"I'm just telling you, they may not do farm work like most folks here in town, but it's still real work. And it's a *good* kind of work, I think. Didn't you see the faces of those kids tonight, watching the show? You think they didn't go home proud?"

"Shoot, boy, I know they did. But these show people think they can come in here and screw around with the local girls and . . ." His voice trailed off. Deaver made sure not to interrupt him.

"That man you talked to, sheriff, this isn't just his business, it's his family, too. He's got his wife and parents with him, and his sons and daughters. You got any children, sheriff?"

"Yes I do, but I don't let them go off any which way like some people do."

"But sometimes kids do things their parents taught them not to do. Sometimes kids do something really bad, and it breaks their parents' hearts. Not *your* kids, but maybe the Aals have a kid like that, and maybe Judge Pulley does too. And maybe when their kids are getting in trouble, people like the Aals and the Pulleys, they do anything they can to keep their kids out of trouble. Maybe they even pretend like anything their kid does, it was somebody else's fault."

The sheriff nodded. "I see what you're getting at, Mr. Teague. But that doesn't change my job."

"Well, what *is* your job, sheriff? Is it putting good people out of work because they got a grown-up son they can't handle? Is it causing Judge Pulley's daughter to get her name dragged through the mud?"

The sheriff sighed. "I don't know why I started listening to you, Teague. I always heard you range riders never talked much."

"We save it all up for times like this."

"You got a plan, Teague? Cause I can't just drive off and forget about this."

"You just go on and do what you got to do, Sheriff. But if it so happens that Nancy Pulley gets home safe and sound, then I hope you won't do anything to hurt either one of these good families."

"So why didn't that actor talk good sense like you instead of getting all hoity-toity with me?"

Deaver just grinned. No use saying what he was thinking—that Marshall wouldn't have gotten hoity-toity if the sheriff hadn't treated him like he was already guilty of a dozen filthy crimes. It was good enough that the sheriff was seeing them more like ordinary folks. So Deaver patted the door of the car and walked on up the road toward the orchard. Now all Deaver had to do was find Ollie.

It wasn't hard. It was like they wanted to be found. They were in tall grass on the far side of the orchard. She was laughing. They didn't hear Deaver coming, not till he was only about ten feet away. She was naked, lying on her dress spread out like a blanket under her. But Ollie still had his pants on, zipped tight. Deaver doubted the girl was a virgin, but at least it wasn't Ollie's fault. She was playing with his zipper when she happened to look up and see Deaver watching. She screeched and sat up, but she didn't even try to cover herself. Ollie, though, he picked up his shirt and tried to cover her.

"Your daddy's looking for you," Deaver said.

She made her mouth into a pout. To her it was a game, and it didn't matter that much to lose a round.

"Do you think we care?" said Ollie.

"Her daddy is the judge of this district, Ollie. Did she tell you that?"

It was plain she hadn't.

"And I just got through talking to the sheriff. He's looking for *you*, Ollie. So I think it's time for Nancy to get her clothes back on."

Still pouting, she got up and started pulling her dress on over her head.

"Better put on your underwear," said Deaver. He didn't want any evidence lying around.

"She didn't wear any," said Ollie. "I wasn't exactly corrupting the innocent."

She had her arms through the sleeves, and now she poked her head through the neck of her bunched-up dress and flashed a smile at Deaver. Her hips moved just a little, just enough to draw Deaver's eyes there. Then she shimmied her dress down to cover her.

"Like I told you," said Ollie. "We men are just pumps with handles on them."

Deaver ignored him. "Get on home, Nancy. You need your rest—you've got a long career ahead of you."

"Are you calling me a whore?" she demanded.

"Not while you're still giving it away free," said Deaver. "And if you have any idea about crying rape, remember that there's a witness who saw you taking down his zipper and laughing while you did it."

"As if Papa would believe you and not me!" But she turned and walked off into the trees. No doubt she knew all the paths home from this place.

Ollie was standing there, making no move to put on his shirt or his shoes. "This was none of your business, Deaver." It was light enough to see that Ollie was making fists. "You got no right to push me around."

"Come on, Ollie, let's get back to the camp before the judge gets there with a warrant."

"Maybe I don't want to."

Deaver didn't want to argue about it. "Let's go."

"Try and make me."

Deaver shook his head. Didn't Ollie realize his fighting words were straight out of third grade recess?

"Come on, Deaver," Ollie taunted. "You said you were going to protect the family from nasty little Ollie, so do it. Break all my ribs. Cut me up in little pieces and carry me home. Don't you carry a knife in your big old ranger boots? Isn't that how big tough strong guys like you get other people to do whatever you say?"

Deaver was fed up. "Act like a man, Ollie. Or don't you have enough of the family talent to fake decency?"

Ollie lost his cockiness and his swagger all at once. He charged at Deaver, flailing both arms in blind rage. It was plain he meant to do a lot of damage. It was also plain he had no idea how to go about doing it. Deaver caught him by one arm and flung him aside. Ollie sprawled on the ground. Poor kid, thought Deaver. Traveling with this pageant wagon all his life, he never even learned how to land a punch.

But Ollie wasn't done. He got up and charged again, and this time a couple of his blows did connect. Nothing bad, but it hurt, and Deaver threw him down harder. Ollie landed wrong on his wrist and cried out with pain. But he was so angry he still got up again, this time striking out with only his right hand, and when he got in close he swung his head from side to side trying to butt Deaver in the face, and when Deaver got hold of his arms Ollie kicked him, tried to knee him in the groin, until finally Deaver had to let go of him and punch him hard in the stomach. Ollie collapsed to his knees and threw up.

The whole time, Deaver never got mad. He couldn't think why—rage had been close to the surface all day, and yet now, when he was really fighting somebody, there was nothing. Just a cold desire to get through with the fighting and get Ollie home.

Maybe it was because he'd already used up his anger on Katie. Maybe that was it.

Ollie was finished vomiting. He picked up his shirt and wiped off his mouth.

"Come on back to camp now," said Deaver.

"No," said Ollie.

"Ollie, I don't want to fight you anymore."

"Then go away and leave me alone."

Deaver bent over to help him to his feet. Ollie jabbed an elbow into Deaver's thigh. It hurt. Deaver was pretty sure Ollie meant to get him in the crotch. This boy didn't seem to know when he was beat.

"I'm not going *back!*" said Ollie. "And even if you knock me out and carry me back, I'll tell the sheriff all about the judge's daughter. I'll tell him I balled her brains out!"

That was about the stupidest, meanest thing Deaver ever heard. For a second he wanted to kick Ollie in the head, just to bounce things around a little inside. But he was sick of hurting Ollie, so he just stood there and asked, "Why?"

"Because you were right, Deaver, I thought about it and you were right, I *do* want to get away from my family. But I don't want you to take my place. I don't want anybody to take my place. I don't want anybody to *have* a place. I want the whole show closed down. I want Father to be a dirt farmer instead of bossing people around all the time. I want perfect little Toolie up to his armpits in pigshit. You understand me, Deaver?"

Deaver looked at him kneeling there, a puddle of puke in front of him in the grass, holding his hurt wrist like a little boy, telling Deaver that he wanted to destroy his own family. "You're the kind of son who doesn't deserve to have parents."

Ollie was crying now, his face twisted up and his voice high-pitched and breaking, but that didn't stop him from answering. "That's right, Deaver, O great judge of the earth! I sure as hell don't deserve *these* parents. Mommy who keeps telling me I'm 'just like Royal' till I want to reach down her throat and tear her heart out. And Daddy who decided I didn't have enough talent so *I* was the one who had to do all the technical work for the show while Toolie got to learn all the parts so someday he'd take Daddy's place and run the company and tell *me* what to do every day of my life until I die! Well, the joke's on Toolie, isn't it? Cause Daddy's never going to give up his place in the company, he's never going to take over the old man parts and let Grandpa retire, because then Toolie would be the leading actor and Toolie would run the company and poor Daddy wouldn't be boss of the universe anymore. So Toolie's going to keep on playing the juvenile parts until he's eighty and Daddy's a hundred and

ten because Daddy won't ever step aside, he won't even die, he'll just keep on running everybody like puppets until finally somebody gets up the guts to kill him or quit. So don't give me any shit about what I deserve, Deaver."

A lot of things were suddenly making sense now. Why Marshall wouldn't let Parley retire. Why Marshall came down so hard on Toolie, kept telling him that he wasn't ready to make decisions. Because Ollie was right. Their places in the show set the order of the family. Whoever had the leading role was head of the company and therefore head of the family. Marshall couldn't give it up.

"I never realized how bad I wanted to get out of this family till you said what you said tonight, Deaver, but then I knew that getting out isn't enough. Because they'd just find somebody to take my place. Maybe you. Or maybe Dusty. Somebody, anyway, and the pageant wagon would go on and on and I want it to *stop*. Take away father's license, that's the only way to stop him. Or no, I've got a better way. I'll go shoot my Uncle Royal. I'll take a shotgun and blast his head off and *then* Daddy can retire. That's the only reason he can't let go of anything, because Royal's in charge of the outriders, Royal's the biggest hero in Deseret, so Daddy can't bear to let himself shrink even the teeniest bit, even if it wrecks everybody's life because my father is just as selfish and rotten as Uncle Royal ever was."

Deaver didn't know what to say. It all sounded true, and yet at the core of it, it wasn't true at all. "No he isn't," Deaver said.

"How would you know! You've never had to live with him. You don't know what it's like being a *nothing* in this family while he's always sitting in judgment on you and you can never measure up, you're never good enough."

"At least he didn't leave you," said Deaver.

"I wish he had!"

"No you don't," said Deaver.

"Yes I do!"

"I'm telling you, Ollie," Deaver said softly. "I've seen how your father is and how your mother is and they look pretty good to me, compared."

"Compared to what," said Ollie scornfully.

"Compared to nothing."

The words hung there in the air, or so it felt to Deaver. Like he could see his own words, could hear them in his own ears as if somebody else said them. He wasn't talking to Ollie now, he was talking to himself. Ollie really did need to get free. His parents really were terrible for him, Ollie hated his place in the family and it wasn't right to force him to stay in it. But Deaver wasn't a son in this family. He never was, he never would be. So he could do Ollie's job and never feel the same kind of hurt

at not being the chosen son. The bad things in the family would never touch him, not the way they touched Ollie—but the good things, Deaver could still have some of those. Being part of a company that needed him. Helping put on shows that changed people. Living with people that you knew would be there tomorrow and the next day, even if all the rest of the world changed around you.

What Deaver realized then was that he really did want Ollie to leave, not so Deaver could take Ollie's place, but so he could have a chance to make his own place among the Aals. Not so he could have Katie, he realized now, or at least not so he could have Katie in particular. He wanted to have them all. Father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, brothers and sisters. Someday children. To be part of that vast web reaching back into the past farther than anybody could remember and down into the future farther than anybody could dream. Ollie had grown up in it, so all he wanted to do was get away—but he'd find out soon enough that he could never get away, not really. Just like Royal, he'd find that the web held firm, for good or ill. Even if you try to hurt them, even if you cut them to the heart, your own people never stop being your own people. They still care about you more than anyone else, you still matter to them more, the web still holds you, so that Royal might have a million people adoring him, but none of them knew him as well, none of them cared about him as much as his brother Marshall, his sister-in-law Scarlett, his old parents Parley and Donna.

Deaver knew what he had to do. It was so plain he wondered why he never saw it before.

"Ollie, come back to camp tonight, and spend tomorrow teaching me everything you can about your job. Then when we get to Moab, I'll take you in and transfer my outrider application rights to you."

Ollie laughed. "I've never ridden a horse in my life."

"Maybe not," said Deaver. "But Royal Aal is your uncle, and he owes the life of his wife and children to your father. Maybe there's too much bad blood between them for them ever to talk to each other again, but if Royal Aal is any kind of man at all, he'll feel a debt."

"I don't want anybody taking me on because they owe my father something."

"Hell, Ollie, do you think somebody's going to take you on cause you look so good? Try it out. See if you like being away from the pageant wagon. If you want to come back, fine. If you want to go on somewhere else, fine. I'm giving you a chance."

"Why?"

"Because you're giving me a chance."

"Do you think Father would ever let you be part of the company, if you helped me sneak away?"

"I'm not talking about sneaking away. I'm talking about walking away, standing up, no hard feelings. You doing no harm to the company cause I'm there to do your jobs. Them doing no harm to you because you're still family even if you aren't part of the show anymore. That's what I think is wrong with all of you. You can't tell where the show leaves off and the family begins."

Ollie stood up, slowly. "You'd do that for me?"

"Sure," said Deaver. "Beat you up, give you application rights, whatever you want. Just come on back to camp, Ollie. We can talk it over with your father tomorrow."

"No," said Ollie. "I want his answer tonight. Now."

Only now, with Ollie standing up, could Deaver see his eyes clearly enough to realize that he wasn't looking at Deaver at all. He was looking past him, looking at something behind him. Deaver turned. Marshall Aal was standing there, maybe fifteen yards back, mostly in the shadow of the trees. Now that Deaver had seen him, Marshall stepped out into the moonlight. His face was terrible, a mix of grief and rage and love that about tore Deaver's heart out with pity even though it also made him afraid.

"I knew you were there, Father," said Ollie. "I knew it the whole time. I wanted you to hear it all."

Well then what the hell was *I* doing here, thought Deaver. What difference did *I* make, if Ollie was really talking to his father all along? All I was good for was talking sense to the sheriff and punching Ollie in the belly so he'd puke his guts out. Well, glad to oblige.

They didn't pay any attention to him. They just stood there, looking at each other, till Deaver figured that it wasn't any of his business anymore. What was going on now wasn't about Deaver Teague, it was about Marshall and Ollie, and Deaver wasn't part of the family. Not yet, anyway.

Deaver walked on back into the orchard and kept walking till he got to the truck. The sheriff was standing there alone, leaning on the hood.

"Where you been, Teague?"

"Judge still coming?"

"He's come and gone. I've got the warrant."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Deaver.

"The girl's home safe," said the sheriff. "But she's sure ticked off at you."

Deaver's heart sank. She told. Probably lies.

"She says she was just doing a little hugging and kissing, and along you come and make her go home."

Well, she lied, all right, but it was a decent kind of lie, one that wouldn't get anybody in trouble. "Yeah, that's it," said Deaver. "Ollie, though, he

didn't appreciate my help. His father's out there now, talking him into coming home."

"Right," said the sheriff. "Well, the way it looks to me, there's no harm done, and the judge isn't calling for blood either, since he believes whatever his sweet little girl tells him. So I don't plan to use this warrant tonight. And if everybody behaves themselves tomorrow then these show gypsies can do their pageant and move on down the road."

"No bad report on them?" said Deaver.

"Nothing to report," said the sheriff. Then he sort of smiled. "Heck, you were right, Teague. They're just a family with the same kind of problems we got here in Hatchville. Sure talk funny, though, don't they?"

"Thanks, Sheriff."

"Good night, range rider." The sheriff walked away.

Moments later, Scarlett and Katie and Toolie were out of their tents, standing beside Deaver, watching the sheriff get in his car and drive off.

"Thank you," whispered Scarlett.

"You were terrific," said Toolie.

"Yeah," said Deaver. "Where do I sleep?"

"It's a warm night," said Toolie. "I'm sleeping on the truck, if that's all right with you."

"Better than lying on the ground," said Deaver.

As he was getting ready for bed, Marshall and Ollie came back to the camp. Scarlett came out of her tent and made a big to-do about his hurt wrist, putting a sling on his arm and all. Deaver just sort of stayed back out of the way, not even watching, just laying out his bedroll and then standing there leaning on the audience side of the truck, listening to the scraps of conversation he could hear. Which actually was quite a lot, since Marshall and Scarlett hardly knew how to talk without making the sound carry across an open field. Nobody said much about how Ollie's wrist came to be hurt.

One thing, though, that maybe changed everything. It was when Marshall said, "I think I'd better play Washington the next time we do *Glory of America*. You know how to do Toolie's parts, don't you, Ollie? As long as Deaver's with us, he can run lights and you can fill a spot on stage. Let Papa go home and retire."

Deaver couldn't hear what Ollie said.

"There's no rush to decide these things," said Marshall. "But if you do decide to join the outriders, I don't think you need to use Deaver's right to apply. I think I could write a letter to Royal that would get you a fair chance."

Again, Ollie's answer was too quiet to hear.

"I just don't think it's right to take away one of Deaver's choices if we don't have to. It's about time I wrote to Royal anyway."

This time it was Scarlett who answered, so Deaver could hear just fine. "You can write to Royal all you like, Marsh, but the only way Parley and Donna can retire is if Ollie comes on stage, and the only way he can do that is if Deaver runs the lights and sound."

"Well, sometime before we get to Moab, I'll ask Deaver if he'd like to stay," said Marshall. "Since he can probably hear us talking right now, that'll give him plenty of time to decide on his answer."

Deaver smiled and shook his head. Of course they knew he was listening—these show people always know when there's an audience. Right at the moment Deaver figured he'd probably say yes. Sure, it'd be sticky for a while with Ollie, partly because of beating him up tonight, but mostly because Ollie had some bad habits with local girls and he wasn't going to cure them overnight. Ollie still might end up needing to get away and join the outriders. Deaver could teach him to ride, just in case. And if Ollie left, then Dusty'd have to move up to doing some more grown-up parts. It wouldn't be long till his voice changed, judging from the height he was getting.

Or things might not work out between Deaver and Katie, in which case it was a good thing the right to apply was good for a year. All kinds of things might change. But it'd all work out. The most important change was the one Marshall made tonight, to take some of the old-man parts and give the leads to Toolie. It meant real change in the way the company ran, and changes like that wouldn't be undone no matter what else happened. No way to guess the future, but it was a sure thing the past would never come back again.

After a while things quieted down and Deaver stripped down to his underwear and crawled inside his bedroll. He tried closing his eyes, but that didn't take him any closer to sleep, so he opened them again and looked at the stars. That was when he heard footsteps coming around the front of the truck. He could tell without looking that it was Katie. She came on over to where Deaver was lying, his bedroll spread out on the pyramid curtain.

"Are you all right, Deaver?" Katie asked.

"Softest bed I've slept on in a year," he said.

"I meant—Ollie was walking kind of doubled over, and it looked like he hurt his hand a little. I wondered if you were okay."

"He just fell a couple of times."

She looked at him steady for a while. "All right, I guess if you wanted to tell what really happened, you would."

"Guess so."

Still she stood there, not going away, not saying anything.

"What's the show tomorrow?" he asked.

"The Book of Mormon one," she said. "No decent parts for women. I

spend half my time in drag." She laughed lightly, but Deaver thought she sounded tired. The moonlight was shining full on her face. She looked a little tired, too, eyes heavy-lidded, her hair straggling beside her face. Kind of soft-looking, that's how she was in the moonlight. He remembered being angry at her tonight. He remembered kissing her. Both memories were a little embarrassing now.

"Sorry I got so mad at you tonight," said Deaver.

"I should only have people mad at me for that reason—because they liked my show better than I did."

"I'm sorry, anyway."

"Maybe you're right. Maybe pageants really are important. Maybe I just get tired of doing them over and over again. I think it's time we took a vacation, did a real play. We could get town people somewhere to take parts in the play. Maybe they'd like us better if they were part of a show."

"Sure." Deaver was tired, and it all sounded fine to him.

"Are you staying with us, Deaver?" she asked.

"I haven't been asked."

"But if Daddy asks you."

"I think maybe."

"Will you miss it? Riding the range?"

He chuckled. "No ma'am." But he knew that if the question was a little different, if she'd asked, Will you miss your dream of riding out on the prairie with Royal Aal, then the answer would've been yes, I miss it already.

But I've got a new dream now, or maybe just the return of an old dream, a dream I gave up on years ago, and the hope of joining the outriders, that was just a substitute, just a make-do. So let's just see, let's find out over the next few weeks and months and maybe years just how much room there is in this family for one more person. Because I'm not signing on for a pageant wagon. I'm not signing on to be a hireling. I'm signing on to be family, and if I find out there's no place for me after all, then I'll have to go searching for another dream altogether.

He thought all that, but he didn't say anything about it. He'd already said too much tonight. No reason to risk getting in more trouble.

"Deaver," she whispered. "Are you asleep?"

"Nope."

"I really do like you, and it wasn't all an act."

That was pretty much an apology, and he accepted it. "Thanks, Katie. I believe you." He closed his eyes.

He heard a rustle of cloth, a slight movement of the truck as more of her weight leaned against it. She was going to kiss him, he knew it, and he waited for the brush of her lips against his. But it didn't come. Again

the truck moved slightly and she was gone. He heard her feet moving across the dewy grass toward the tents.

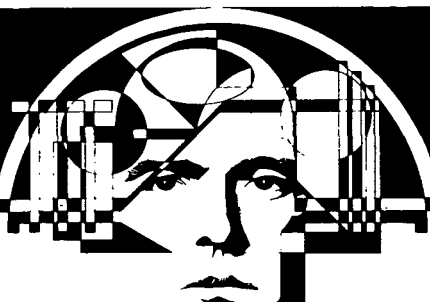
The sky was clear and the night was cool. The moon was high now, as near to straight up as it was going to get. Tomorrow it might well rain—it had been four days since the last storm, and that was about as long as you got around here. So tomorrow there might be a storm, which meant tying little tents over all the lights, and if it got bad enough, putting off the show till the next night. Or canceling and moving on. It felt a little strange, thinking how he was now caught up in a new rhythm—tied to the weather, tied to the shows, and which towns had seen which ones within the last year, but above all tied to these people, their wishes and customs and habits and whims. It was kind of scary, too, that he'd be following along, not always doing things his own way.

But why should he be scared? There was going to be change anyway, no matter what. With Bette dead, even if he stayed with the range riders there'd be a new horse to get used to. And if he'd applied to the outriders, that'd all be new. So it wasn't as though his life wasn't going to get turned upside down anyway.

Sleep came sooner than he thought it would. He dreamed, a deep hard dream that seemed like the most important thing in his life. In his dream he remembered something he hadn't been able to think of in his whole life: what his real name was, the name his own parents gave him, back before the mobbers killed them. In his dream he saw his mother's face, and heard his father's voice. But as he woke in the morning, the dream fading, he tried to think of that voice, and all he could hear inside his head was an echo of his own voice: and the face of his mother faded into Katie's face. And when he shaped his true name with silent lips, he knew that it wasn't true anymore. It was the name of a little boy who got lost somewhere and was never found again. Instead he murmured the name he had spent his whole life earning. "Deaver Teague."

He smiled a little at the sound of it. It wasn't a bad name at all, and he kind of liked imagining what it could mean someday. ●





Classified Marketplace

1A AUGUST/89

ISAAC ASIMOV/ANALOG combination CLASSIFIED AD rate is \$8.25 per word—payable in advance—(\$123.75 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

SCIENCE Fiction/Fantasy. Free catalog of Pulp, Digests, Paperbacks, Hardcover. Collections also Purchased. Ray Bowman, Box 167, Carmel, Indiana 46032.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperbacks, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box AA-54, Neche, ND 58265.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

A gift sure to please—ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, published monthly. Send \$19.95 for 13 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 7058, Red Oak, IA 51591.

MISCELLANEOUS

DON'T ANSWER THE PHONE? Use our ideas on your machine. Send \$3.95 for five! The Old Philosophy Shop, P.O. Box 3256-1A, Duluth, MN 55803.

MISCELLANEOUS—Cont'd

READ "How To Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Instructive booklet tells how to write an effective classified ad. Also includes a certificate worth \$5.00 toward a classified ad in any of our publications. For your copy, send \$3.25 (includes postage) to Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

OF INTEREST TO ALL

WRITER/PRODUCER seeks real life stories for television/films. Tara Untiedt, Tara Productions, P.O. Box 10625, Burbank, CA 91510-0625.

TAPES & CASSETTES

OLDTIME Radio Programs. SCIENCE FICTION, Suspense, Adventure, Mysteries, Comedies. CLASSIC TAPES. Free catalogues. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, PA 17349.

**YOU'LL MAKE
MONEY**

**SAVE MONEY TOO—
BY READING and ANSWERING
THESE CLASSIFIED ADS**

SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR

by Erwin S. Strauss

Note the WorldCon and North American SF Con membership deadlines coming up. Plan now for social weekends with your favorite SF authors, editors, and fellow fans. For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, and a sample of SF folksongs, send me an SASE (addressed, stamped #10 [business] envelope) at Box 3343, Fairfax VA 22038. Early evening's usually a good time to call cons (most are home phones; be polite). When writing cons, enclose an SASE. Look for me at cons with a Filthy Pierre badge, playing a musical keyboard.

JUNE, 1989

30-July 4—**WesterCon**. For info, write: Box 8442, Van Nuys CA 91409. Or call: (714) 750-8000 (10 am to 10 pm, not collect). Con will be held in: Anaheim CA (if city omitted, same as in address), at the Marriott. Guests will include: John Varley, Arthur Hlavaty. West's big annual con.

30-July 2—**EmpiriCon**. Holiday Inn, Elizabeth NJ (near New York). Fred Pohl, Jack Williamson.

30-July 3—**InConJunction**. Adam's Mark Hotel, Indianapolis IN. Feist, Rosenberg, Maitz, Wurts.

30-July 3—**ConText**. Lister Hall, U. of AB, Edmonton AB. Gibson, de Lint, F. Robinson, Merril.

JULY, 1989

1-3—**Ampersand**, % Mazuranic, D. Zokajla 1, 41430 Samobor, Yugoslavia. East European relax-a-con.

7-9—**LibertyCon**, Box 695, Hixson TN 37343. Chattanooga TN. Third annual. 500 to 600 fans expected.

14-16—**OKon**, Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74159. (918) 622-2225. R. (Psycho) Bloch, artist D. Mattingly.

14-16—**UniCon**, Box 7553, Silver Spring MD 20907. College Park MD. Clam Chowder farewell concert.

21-23—**Archon**, Box 50125, Clayton MO 63105. (314) 412-2860. St. Louis MO. Brin, Freas, Schwartz.

21-23—**ConVersion**, Box 1088, Stn. M, Calgary AB T2P 2K7. (403) 242-1807. H. Harrison, Longyear.

21-23—**SliCon**, Box 14238, Baton Rouge LA 70898. Holiday Inn, Slidell LA. No more at press time.

21-23—**NECon**, Box 3251, Darlington Br., Pawtucket RI 02861. Jeff Jones, S. Wiater. Horror only.

28-30—**MapleCon**, Box 3156, Stn. D, Ottawa ON K1P 6H7. (613) 285/0771. K.S. Robinson, Romita.

28-30—**RiverCon**, Box 58009, Louisville KY 40258. (502) 448-6562. \$15 to July 15, \$20 at the door.

28-31—**MythCon**, Box 806, Stn. A, Nanaimo BC B9R 5N2. (604) 756-0138. Vancouver BC. Tolkien, etc.

AUGUST, 1989

31-Sep. 4—**Noreascon 3**, Box 46, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139. WorldCon in Boston. \$80 to 7/15.

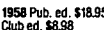
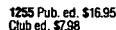
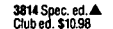
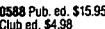
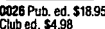
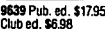
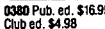
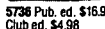
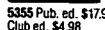
AUGUST, 1990

23-27—**ConFiction**, % Box 1252, BGS, New York NY 10274. Hague, Holland. WorldCon. \$70 in 1989.

30-Sep. 3—**ConDiego**, Box 15771, San Diego CA 92115. North American SF Con. \$55 to June 30 '89.

AUGUST, 1991

29-Sep. 2—**ChiCon V**, Box A3120, Chicago IL 60690. WorldCon. H. Clement, R. Powers. \$75 in '89.



ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



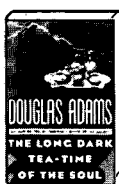
4911 Pub. ed. \$18.95
Club ed. \$5.98



5314 Pub. ed. \$18.95
Club ed. \$6.98



5462 Pub. ed. \$18.95
Club ed. \$5.98



0893 Pub. ed. \$17.95
Club ed. \$4.98



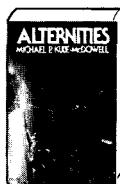
3962 Pub. ed. \$19.95
Club ed. \$9.98



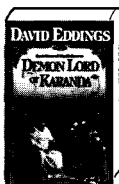
7336 Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$8.98



5728 Pub. ed. \$17.95
Club ed. \$7.98



★ 9613 Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$6.98



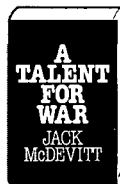
2998 Pub. ed. \$18.95
Club ed. \$6.98



★ 4929 Pub. ed. \$17.95
Club ed. \$4.98



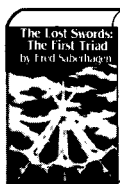
2311 Pub. ed. \$17.95
Club ed. \$5.98



0695 Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$8.98



1420 Includes the First, Second and Third Books.
Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$7.98



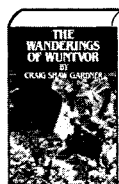
7260 Woundhealer's Story; Sightblinder's Story; Stonecutter's Story.
Comb. pub. ed. \$45.85
Club ed. \$7.98



7377 Seventh Son; Red Prophet; Prentice Alvin.
Comb. pub. ed. \$53.85
Club ed. \$9.98



★ 9612 Soldiers of Paradise; Sugar Rain. 2-in-1 vol.
Comb. pub. ed. \$35.90
Club ed. \$8.98



7344 A Difficulty with Gwarves; An Excess of Enchantment; A Disagreement with Death. 3-in-1 vol.
Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$7.50



0018 The Incomplete Enchanter; The Castle of Iron; Wall of Serpents. 3-in-1 vol.
Spec. ed. ▲
Club ed. \$8.98

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL SELECTIONS.

TAKE ANY BOOKS FOR \$5 with membership

▲ Exclusive hardcover edition

★ Explicit scenes and/or language may be offensive to some

THE Science Fiction BOOK CLUB

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED